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FRAGMENTATION AND WHOLENESS IN THE NOVELS OF  
LUISA JOSEFINA HERNANDEZ AND GERLIND  
REINSHAGEN

by

Nan Hussey

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

1999

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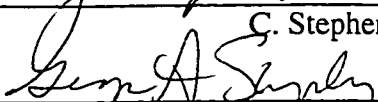
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Abstract  
FRAGMENTATION AND WHOLENESS IN  
THE NOVELS OF LUISA JOSEFINA  
HERNANDEZ AND GERLIND REINSHAGEN

by Nan Hussey  
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Themes of fragmentation and wholeness are the twentieth-century version of the eternal questions of disconnection and the search for unity inherent in the human condition. Where the literature of earlier ages has posited the existence of unitary selfhood, that of the present century sees a breakdown of the belief in even the possibility of psychic indivisibility.

Gerlind Reinshagen and Luisa Josefina Hernández are two of the many authors who deal with questions of fracturing and the search for convergence in their novels. Although Reinshagen is German and Hernández is from Mexico, the lives of the two writers show interesting personal parallels, including greater renown as playwrights than as novelists.

This dissertation traces the themes of wholeness and fragmentation in two works by Gerlind Reinshagen and in three by Luisa Josefina Hernández. When contrasted with the understanding of wholeness offered by several scholars, Hernández is revealed as a proponent of the view of wholeness as equilibrium, which is attainable either through self-actualization, or in combination with another person. She also posits a macro level of balance embracing ever greater groups of people. Reinshagen, in contrast, does not view wholeness as achievable, but rather, as approachable at best, and demonstrates in her novels how the formation of open communities allows the individual access to that degree of integration possible today.

The question of the relative obscurity of these two novelists is also addressed, as is the difference in their reception as novelists and as playwrights.

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## DEDICATION

The author wishes to dedicate this dissertation to her father, Charles William Hussey, who was the first in his family to receive a University degree, a BS in Mechanical Engineering, and whose own father had only a fourth-grade education, but whose mother was a high school graduate and an ardent supporter of education. The author also wishes to dedicate this dissertation to her mother, Sarah Alice Fulkerson Hussey, who comes from a long line of school teachers, and who did the best she could, in a rural town, to satisfy the language thirst of a child who wanted, from the age of seven, to learn German.

## INTRODUCTION: ON FRAGMENTATION AND OBSCURITY IN TWO WOMEN AUTHORS

The appeal of studying the works of a living author is manifold. First, there is usually an ability to relate, provided the author in question is based in a similar cultural tradition, with the societal and historical features of the works. Second, there is the thrill of expectation, the exquisite anxiety of hope, in the anticipation of forthcoming work. The thrill of discovery often follows, a sense of exploration rewarded, when one finds this new work (and also its predecessors) highly stimulating reading, especially when not widely recognized. Also, there is the slight chance that one's penchant for a particular living author will later seem like foresight, should the works of the writer in question, years later, come to be more favorably assessed than they were at the time of writing. Finally, the opportunity to participate in the initial assessment of an author's work is exhilarating in a fashion different than is entering the field of commentary as part of the necessary ongoing reassessment of the long-canonized author. Neither is more important than the other, but the sense of being the first to explore new literary turf offers, perhaps, an exquisite anxiety in comparison to mining long-established prose veins for their overlooked or mis-identified treasure.

As I became increasingly interested in literature written by women, a colleague introduced me to the works of Mexican playwright, critic and novelist Luisa Josefina Hernández (b. 1928). Beginning with what may be her finest novel to date, *Nostalgia de Troya*, and moving from there over *La plaza de Puerto Santo* and *El lugar donde crece la hierba*, to what has proven my personal favorite, *Almeida: Danzón*, I was struck by several of their qualities, one being how unbound the author was to any particular structure or

framework, and another being the consistency of themes treated from one novel to the next. In particular, I was intrigued by the thematic emphasis on wholeness, in an age in which a focus on fragmentation predominates. This idea itself seems to me to be that which unifies her *oeuvre*, connecting one novel to another in a way that — for her — style does not.

Coincidentally, after several years of study, I was growing disillusioned with the literary output of Anna Seghers (1900-1983), slowly reading through the many dry, formulaic novels she'd written in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) following the end of WWII. Where her early works had either been stimulating but immature (e.g. *Aufstand der Fischer von St. Barbara*<sup>1</sup> [1928]) or examples of brilliant composition (e.g. *Transit* [1944], "Ausflug der toten Mädchen"<sup>2</sup> [1948]), the bulk of her writing was produced in conformity with the peculiarly East German version of Socialist Realism known as the "Bitterfelder Weg." I began to explore the work of living German women novelists, and was particularly struck by the dense textures and exploratory narrative structures of the work of Gerlind Reinshagen (b. 1926). She places her characters in highly fragmented environments, settings where disconnection and dissipation dominate, from there to search for the wholeness they lack.

As I researched these two authors and their works, I discovered that, not only do their works explore some of the same topics, but they share several personal characteristics. Born but two years apart, both are far better known as playwrights than as novelists. Both, in fact, are highly regarded as playwrights, and each was — Hernández in Mexico in the 1950s and 1960s, and Reinshagen in Germany in the 1970s — the preeminent woman writing for the stage in her country. Each author has written more plays than novels, yet each views the latter as her literary legacy. (In addition, both women have created their narrative works outside dominant contemporary literary currents.)

### Post-1965 Mexican Narrative

The literary scene in Mexico during the mid-1960s through the 1970s could be viewed as dominated by three different stylistic trends. The most familiar of these is one not limited to Mexico; it swept the whole of Latin America, beginning in the 1960s and running until the mid-1970s, and is generally referred to as “the Boom.” The name designates what appeared to be an explosion in both the production and availability of experimental and innovative literary fiction from Latin America. These novels are characterized by what has become known as “magical realism,” the appearance of the fantastic presented in the same tone as the daily, as if it were both really happening and not unusual. Some critics understand magical realism as based in the indigenous population’s view of life as essentially mythical. Others attribute it to the idea that Latin American reality simply incorporates that which might seem bizarre, unusual or fantastic to people outside this culture. A third understanding of the concept, is that fantastic images and events are used to underscore what is marvelous and surprising in the everyday world.

The Boom created literary superstars and made bestsellers of works that might otherwise have expected a limited audience. Only one of the four (some would argue for more) major figures generally included in this category is Mexican, Carlos Fuentes. Born in 1928, the same year as Luisa Josefina Hernández, he is, like her, a polyglot and an extraordinarily prolific writer. Fluent in Spanish, English and French, where Hernández is fluent in Spanish, English and German, he spent his youth in various countries, living a privileged existence as the son of a career diplomat. He published his first short stories in his teens, his first book of short stories at age twenty and his first novel when he was twenty-six. By this age, Hernández had already seen ten of her plays staged. Fuentes

himself has had a very public and transnational career, having served as a diplomat, has several times held guest professor positions at universities abroad, and has played a part in the creation of a publishing house and a political organization. Hernández, in contrast, up until her recent retirement, has worked quietly as a professor in Mexico City for several decades, leaving briefly only to accept two fellowships abroad and to teach in Cuba for a year.

Fuentes' Boom-era novels are especially technically innovative, experimental in form, technique and narrative voice. He employs both montage (the juxtaposition of seemingly disconnected scenes) and flashback. Sometimes he makes use of a fragmented narrative voice within a single character, rather than a split among several figures. One hallmark of his writing during this period, is the presence of ancestral voices in the form of indigenous mythologies inserted into the modern day. Another characteristic is the attempt to represent Mexico's history figuratively through his characters and plots. Fuentes is credited with originating new forms of the novel. Hernández, in contrast, is known for utilizing and creating variations on a multitude of extant forms. Fuentes' style is more consistent, recognizably his own, whereas Hernández is more of a chameleon. Carlos Fuentes is internationally famous, both in literary and political circles, while Luisa Josefina Hernández remains almost unknown outside Mexico.

The second literary current in Mexico during these years is known as "la Onda<sup>3</sup>," and was a youth movement, most of whose authors were born during the 1940s. Noted for extensive word-play, for puns, slang and constant reference to popular culture, *la Onda* novels are entirely written in the youth slang of that time, a combination of marginalized languages from the underworld, the prisons and the U.S./Mexican border. A Spanish corrupted by English and crime, it was, at the time, a markedly male language, full of obscenities and vulgarities which have since contaminated the vernacular. In addition, the

attempt was made to inscribe within this prose the rhythms of rock and roll music. Collage and montage play a role, as do both the telephone and the tape recorder. The effect is one of immediacy, fluidity, rhythm, realism in a new sense and, sometimes, poetry.

*La Onda* novels generally focus on saying rather than being, and on going, rather than doing. Travel, often in the form of aimless movement, appears frequently, and these trips include those journeys taken via drugs, sex, music, dance and drink. The youthful protagonists are young, remaining adolescents while in their twenties, self-centered, middle-class and focused on possessions as a form of status. These novels portray communication, in its modern, automated, electronic aspect, a thing that isolates, rather than something that leads to understanding. It is an immersion in superficiality, and a rebellion against the lives and the novels of the parental generation. In part, it is either a borrowed or assumed culture, or an amalgam of neighboring cultures, influenced as it is by U.S. youth culture in the music, the electronics and part of the language.

With the recent exception of Margarita Daltón, as is the case with the Boom, all of the authors associated with *la Onda* were male. Recent criticism and critical reevaluation of the movement also place several works by Esther Seligson, Ethel Krause and Barbara Jacobs, retrospectively, under the umbrella of this movement.

The third literary current in Mexico during the mid-1960s through the 1970s is sometimes known as “*escritura*,”<sup>4</sup> and is understood by some to have begun earlier and continued into the 1980s. The parameters of *escritura* are less tightly established than those of *la Onda*, but the two movements are related in that both are characterized by language experiments, and that both are viewed as reactions to and rejections of the so-called realist novel. *Escritura* draws its inspiration from both the French *nouveau roman* tradition and from earlier Latin American authors who engaged in language-play within their works. Although the focus is on the interior, these are not psychological novels in the

sense of consciously embodying the theories of Freud or Jung, or any of their immediate philosophical offspring. The language is not slangy, but intellectual and metaphysical, and exemplifies the search for a poetic aesthetic within the novel. Where language in the novels of *la Onda* seems a transcription of the verbal, the focus in *escritura* is on the possibilities of language as written.

The writer of these works is expected only to register and represent various realities in the minds of the characters, assuming that the reader will be an active participant in the novel's (re)construction. This reader is offered multiple possibilities for self-selection in the text, and it is his/her responsibility to organize this material into useful shapes in her/his mind, to interpret it and recreate it in her/his imagination. The technical aspects of the novel are often emphasized in *escritura*. Repetition (of events, of situations) is also characteristic, as is an emphasis on the memory, memories and dreams. Unlike in *la Onda*, there are no overtones of social criticism, no aspect of a new form of realism, updated to match the times. *Escritura* is about verbal creation: It is language for language's sake. It is an exploration of both the poetic and the logic of fiction in the form of fictional logic. But the category is also broad enough to include a range of authors whose novels are characterized by brevity, irony and abstractions, and which are marked by their use of humor. The designation *escritura* is, in fact, sufficiently amorphous as to make categorization imprecise. Some critics, for example, include the works of Esther Seligson as part of *escritura*, while others place her within *la Onda*. Some view Fuentes' novel *Cambio de piel* (1967) as falling within the realm of *escritura*, while others refer to it as a work of the Boom or even post-Boom. It also draws extensively on youth culture and the motif of the journey, like novels of *la Onda*. As with all literary trends, these categorizations are not exact, and there is some overlap between them.

Unlike in Germany, the flowering of the women's movement in Mexico in the 1970s did not produce a recognized or so-designated women's literary movement until the following decade. Although women began publishing in ever-increasing numbers from the beginning of this decade, they had already been productive in the field of literature for most of the twentieth century. The literary and feminist aspects of this chapter in Mexican history are related. The first feminist women's magazine, *fem*, was founded in 1976. The first graduate program in women's studies did not follow until 1984, at the Colegio de México. Known by its acronym, PIEM (Programa Interdisciplinario de Estudios de la Mujer<sup>5</sup>), it has published most of the scholarly work on feminism and women produced in Mexico from that time. One year later, a Center for Women's Studies was established in the School of Psychology at the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM), where women's studies courses are also offered in the School of Political and Social Sciences and the School of Philosophy and Letters. In 1990, *fem* was joined by a biannual feminist journal, *debate feminista*. Recently, a center for women's studies has opened at the university in Guadalajara.

Currently, as part of a reexamination of the various literary designations or movements, works by women writers which, in the 1960s and 1970s, were often lumped all together under an over-arching banner labeled "women's literature," (as was the case in Germany in the latter part of this century) are being identified as, indeed, belonging to one or the other of these trends. As mentioned earlier, several women wrote novels, that are now sometimes considered part of *la Onda*. Others, including Luisa Josefina Hernández, Elena Garro, Rosario Castellanos, Inés Arredondo, Julieta Campos and Amparo Dávila, may all come to be considered part of Mexico's contribution to the Boom.

Many of the authors whose works during the 1960s and 1970s were part of one of the three literary movements described above, as well as some new to the literary scene,

have since produced novels which are loosely regarded as part of the “post-Boom” category as described by Philip Swanson. This period of literary history is less formally delineated, due to the proximity of today’s critics to this time period. Whether or not the “post-Boom” designation will stick is unknown. Some of the rough hallmarks of this literature of the 1980s and the 1990s include a retreat from the long, disjoint, fragmented novels of the previous two decades, and its totalizing scale. This trend leads away from universalization and back toward themes and concerns specific to Latin America. There has also been some relaxing of the boundaries between literary prose and the media of popular culture, as post-Boom authors adopt or incorporate popular forms and elements into their work.

Although Swanson includes Elena Poniatowska among this group, her work requires particular mention for where it does not fit into any of these categories. Although there exist several historical precedents or fore-runners, Poniatowska is commonly considered as a founder of the new genre that has arisen from Latin America known as “testimonio,” the testimonial novel. Appearing in 1969, her novel *Hasta no verte, Jesús mío*, was soon followed by other works across Latin America that adopted its form and characteristics. It is the first recognized Western genre in which more of the practitioners are women than men. Poniatowska has not continued to write in the *testimonio* genre, instead exploring the documentary novel (*La noche de Tlatelolco*<sup>6</sup> [1971]) and the novel of letters (*Querida Diego, te abraza Quiela*<sup>7</sup> [1978]) among other forms. All of Poniatowska’s work has been characterized by its amalgamation of fictional and nonfictional discourse and its extensive incorporation of popular speech.

In the first decades of its existence as a partitioned country, literary trends in the DDR had basically no effect on what was written and published in the Federal Republic of Germany (BRD). By the 1960s, the German literary scene saw the dismantling of the old and a striking out in a new direction, the result of a multi-step post-war process of literary reconciliation. Works written ignored works written in exile during WWII had been ignored and their authors had been snubbed immediately following the war. The reading public and the community of writers had struggled through a conflicted relationship with the idea of an “inner emigration.” The German people had endured several years of a U.S.-bred “reeducation” program that included the wide availability of U.S. classics and biographies of selected U.S. statesmen,<sup>8</sup> and had had — following the book burnings of the early Nazi years and the destructive bombing of WWII — to republish the classics of German literature in order for an adult generation to familiarize themselves with them. In addition, novels had only finally begun to address the recent past in the “Vergangenheitsbewältigung”<sup>9</sup> literature of the 1950s. At this point in the decade, the first formal writers’ association, Gruppe ‘47, disbanded, coincident with the end of the post-war rebuilding phase and shortly after the erection of the Berlin wall.

The 1960s saw a re-politicization of literature in which characters modeled rejection of social institutions (e.g. marriage, family, church, government), and novels presented no solutions to the dilemmas experienced by their anti-heroes. Despite the disillusionment portrayed, the novel retained a moralistic element. Attention was turned from the past to the present, and narrative prose addressed current social and world problems, including the division of Germany, the bleak economic outlook for the young, and the Vietnam war. The “Kölner Schule” of New Realism set as its goal making the reader able to experience reality in the text. Generally characterized as descriptive literature, this movement was concerned with social facts. As an approach to conscious reality, it employed distancing

elements of the grotesque and shock-value techniques in an effort to cut through the surface to the reality below.

1961 also saw the formation of the “Dortmunder Gruppe ‘61,” a coalition of socialist and communist writers deeply committed to a literature of political engagement, with a focus on the world of the worker in an industrial society. Often employing a reportage style, their books are marked by journalistic and documentary overtones. The premise of this group was to produce a literature for workers, not merely about workers, and not necessarily written by workers, although some of it was. Most of these works found little resonance with the public, and the group was followed, in 1969, by the formation of another whose goals were similar, but who were determined to overcome what Ralf Schnell views as the weaknesses of the Dortmund Group’s literary production, namely, naiveté, simplicity and a lack of aesthetic originality.<sup>10</sup>

The 1970s produced an outpouring of literature by women, which came to be grouped together under the banner of “Frauenliteratur.”<sup>11</sup> The impetus for this sudden influx of a great number of women into the field was the German women’s movement of the 1970s, which also produced the founding of a general feminist magazine, two feminist literary magazines and two feminist presses. As in Mexico, degree programs in women’s studies were established and feminist criticism made its first strong showing. Many texts by women that might have been grouped with one of two other literary trends that spanned this decade and the one that followed, were instead lumped together under this heading.

Coincident with *Frauenliteratur*, the 1970s and 1980s saw increased technical experimentation in the novel. Reading and writing were emphasized as reciprocal processes; thus, ever-increasing demands were made on the reader. Expansion of the literary techniques of collage, montage, interior monologue and various distancing techniques proceeded, in an attempt at producing psychological realism. This was

sometimes coupled with a sympathetic protagonist with whom reader identification was sought. Multiplication of perspectives, speech-fragmentation, polyphonic narrative voice and intertextuality were refined during the 1980s.

The second current to span both decades is known as the “*Neue Subjektivität*,”<sup>12</sup> and this movement produced novels described as “*Verständigungstexte*.”<sup>13</sup> This is an identity-fiction somewhere between autobiography and an imagined creation, in which the emphasis is on the individual. It is an egocentric literature in which the accent is on self-discovery, self-assurance and self-reflection. Topics range across the scale of human experience, but the focus is always on the particular, never on the exchange between individuals. This form of the novel sought to produce recognition in the reader. In the 1980s, the *Neue Subjektivität* moved from reflected interiority to individual insight coupled with a re-embrace of society. This literature retained its autobiographical aspect, mixing personal history and inner existence with current events. Male and female authors both participated in this new trend.

It must also be recognized that there were several authors writing across the 1950s and in some cases into the 1980s who, for the most part, stood outside these various movements, although several of them were active members of Gruppe ‘47. These are the writers who served as the “*Gedächtnis einer Generation*,”<sup>14</sup> and who recounted the trajectory of those who survived the Third Reich and its attendant insanity and miseries, writers such as Heinrich Böll (1917-1985), Günter Grass (b. 1927) and Alfred Andersch (1914-1980), among others.

German literature in the twentieth century cannot be said to have produced a superstar similar to Carlos Fuentes in Mexico. Nor do German literary currents always parallel those in Latin America, even taking the full corpus of German-language literature into account. Where they do intersect is in the 1970s as marking the full scale entry of

women into all literary endeavors, from the production of literature to its publication, study and criticism; and in textual experimentation with both structure and narrative voice. Certain themes and topics are also common to both, at roughly similar times.

Gerlind Reinshagen and Luisa Josefina Hernández:  
Textual Fragmentation and Literary Obscurity

Themes and subjects coincide for Gerlind Reinshagen and Luisa Josefina Hernández. Reading the work of two women who are such close parallels in certain respects should allow for better illumination of both. The quest for unity within disjunction is a significant topic in this century, and most likely, into the next. The twentieth century could be termed (and probably has been) 'The Century of Fragmentation.' Concern with, and investigation into, the nature of this state or problem pervades many areas of twentieth-century Western cultures. A survey of the titles of over 3,000 pieces of the literature available on the subject reveals studies in a multitude of disciplines,<sup>15</sup> including areas that are totally unrelated to the humanities, such as blast fragmentation and ice fragmentation. The arts sometimes focus on, as well as exhibit, fragmentation.<sup>16</sup> We are bombarded by both the concept and the feelings of this condition.

This focus on fragmentation is often accompanied by a desire for its opposite, and by some type of search for wholeness. This is true even in the case of physics, although not necessarily in all sciences concerned, particularly in some areas of geology and biology. Nostalgia for a (possibly mythical) bygone age in which the human self was one, a unity within a greater, conjoined whole is common. And while the synonyms for fragmentation are many,<sup>17</sup> the list of synonyms for wholeness is far longer.

Many of the synonyms for fragmentation are associated with uncomfortable or painful feelings, including fear, and while some of the concepts represented by these words are viewed culturally as positive during the latter portion of the twentieth century (diversity,

multiculturalism, individuation, decentralization), they may produce the fear associated with change for those who were not raised with these ideas. It is telling that the word 'change' is found as a synonym for 'fragmentation' in studies on the subject. To a certain extent, fragmentation describes human perception of rapid change and the unsettling feelings that accompany it.

Synonyms for wholeness are many<sup>18</sup>, and are all opposed to fragmentation in various studies on the subject. The stress here is on the group over the individual and on feelings of safety, security, reliability. Several of these words imply a return to a condition of safety and contentment from an uncomfortable or isolated position.

Despite the fact that there are more synonyms for wholeness than for fragmentation, there is more literature i.e., a greater quantity of work, on the latter.<sup>19</sup> One reason for this disparity is that studies of unity and oneness are not equally spread across the breadth of disciplines that the focus on fragmentation encompasses. Secondly, in a number of disciplines, wholeness is studied solely in conjunction with fragmentation, rather than in and of itself. These studies tend to cluster tightly around varieties of human wholeness: of the psyche, of the individual, of the community.

The pull toward fragmentation and the longing for wholeness are themes that permeate the literature of twentieth-century Western civilizations. In some literary works this theme is merely a single thread in the body of the work, but for others it forms either the weft or the woof of the story. It is, however, virtually impossible to write anything of value during this century that is untouched by this cultural current.

But what is 'fragmentation?' What does 'wholeness' mean? How does one understand these concepts beyond a list of synonyms and one's own limited experience of life? Is our very understanding of fragmentation itself disjoint, as might be indicated by the lengthy list of synonyms? Is our understanding of wholeness likewise partial or frayed?

How is this preoccupation of the modern mind approached by scholars in various disciplines? More importantly (from my perspective), how are these concepts dealt with by those closer to the populace: the psychologists, sociologists, theologians or theoreticians whose works are accessible to the educated public?

The questions I am asking — How is wholeness defined? Where does fragmentation appear? Are they contrasted directly? — are joined by another, related more to these authors themselves than to their works. Namely, why is it that two such skilled novelists, whose work deals with themes so pertinent to this age, are still so little known outside academic circles, and comparatively so little studied within them? Why, in both cases, have none of their novels been translated into English,<sup>20</sup> while examples exist where novels of arguably lesser quality, but produced by authors of a different (more recent) generation, (e.g. *El plan infinito* (1991) by Isabel Allende and *La ley del amor* (1995) by Laura Esquivel) have been made available in English?<sup>21</sup> It is not that these works are not translated at all, at least not in the case of Hernández, a few of whose non-dramatic texts have been published in Polish. Yet in general, these novels are not available in the native languages of those countries currently producing significant scholarly investigations of literature by women: French, German (in the case of Hernández), Spanish (in the case of Reinshagen) or English. My search into the natures of fragmentation and wholeness through the novels of these two authors will also contain a quest for an answer to this additional question of their relative obscurity.

This study will, therefore, examine questions of wholeness and fragmentation in twentieth-century Western culture, as arising from and illustrated by the novels of Luisa Josefina Hernández and Gerlind Reinshagen, and elucidated by commentary on the subject from twentieth-century thinkers in various disciplines. It will also address the question of

these two authors' current relative obscurity as novelists within the scholarly community, and propose a theory that might explain it.

<sup>1</sup> *Uprising of the St. Barbara Fishermen.*

<sup>2</sup> "The Excursion of the Dead Girls."

<sup>3</sup> "La Onda" translated literally means "the wave," but the word is related to several Mexican slang expressions: "De onda," meaning "hip," "trendy," "cool;" "agarra la onda," meaning to "get it;" "estar en onda," meaning "to be high on drugs" and "estar en la onda," meaning "to be in," "to be hip."

<sup>4</sup> Literally translated, "escritura" means "writing," "handwriting" or "script," with further meanings of "deed," "document" or "instrument" in the legal profession. The movement parallels that of the French *l'écriture*.

<sup>5</sup> Interdisciplinary Program of Women's Studies.

<sup>6</sup> *Massacre in Mexico.*

<sup>7</sup> *Dear Diego.*

<sup>8</sup> Fiction available in the immediate post-war years in Germany included works by Faulkner, Caldwell and Hemingway. Biographies of Abraham Lincoln and Benjamin Franklin were thrust on the public.

<sup>9</sup> Literally, "overcoming the past." This also involved a form of "Auseinandersetzung" or "coming-to-terms-with" recent history.

<sup>10</sup> Schnell 221.

<sup>11</sup> Women's Literature.

<sup>12</sup> New Subjectivity.

<sup>13</sup> Literally, "texts of understanding," although "Verständigung" can also be translated as "agreement" or "information."

<sup>14</sup> Memory of a Generation.

<sup>15</sup> These include political science (the fragmentation of local governments, of nations into smaller countries, of government services, of states into regional interests, of cities, of power, fragmentation and segregation); education (fragmented classroom learning approaches, fragmentation within departments and disciplines, knowledge fragmentation, textbook fragmentation); psychology (fragmentation of the discipline, fragmentation of the human psyche, of urban lives, of memory, of reality); sociology (home ownership and the fragmentation of society into richer and poorer, cultural fragmentation, race and gender fragmentation, fragmentation of the family, of employee relations); business (market fragmentation, the fragmentation of contemporary consumption, systems fragmentation); art (fragmentation of the human figure, audience fragmentation); literature (fragmented characterization and the self-fragmentation of characters, of the narrative, of mythic language, of plot structure, of the sentence or of the word itself); linguistics (fragmentation of grammar); philosophy (fragmentation of reason); agriculture (land fragmentation); architecture (the design of fragmentation and the fragmentation of

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design); religion (the fragmentation of modern Judaism, of the Southern Baptist Convention, fragmentation into sects); electronic technology (storage fragmentation, data fragmentation); military science (fragmentation bombs, “fragging” one’s superior); physics (chaos theory, quark fragmentation, heavy ion fragmentation, wavelength fragmentation, nuclear fragmentation, molecular fragmentation); chemistry (cycloheptene fragmentation, triggered fragmentation experiments with sodium, silicon oil and pentane, krypton isotope projectile fragmentation); biology (species fragmentation, DNA fragmentation, fiber fragmentation, colony fragmentation); genetics (chromosomal fragmentation); forestry (habitat fragmentation); genetics (chromosomal fragmentation); forestry (habitat fragmentation); physiology (sleep fragmentation); geology (rock fragmentation, coal fragmentation); archeology (fragmentation of prehistoric antiquity); nutrition (protein fragmentation).

- <sup>16</sup> For example, composer Roger Hannay has a work for chamber ensemble titled “Fragmentation” and one for orchestra titled “Fragmentation II.” Also, in 1993, a museum in New Britain, Connecticut held an art exhibition entitled “Fragment, Fragmentary, Fragmentation” which featured works by 15 living artists. In 1994 artist Ann Blaas staged a one-woman show of her paintings which she titled “Fragmentation and Isolation.” There are many more examples possible.
- <sup>17</sup> A quick survey of three electronic databases turns up splintering, discontinuity, fracturing, alienation, ambivalence, chaos, diversity, individuation, multiculturalism, change, dissipation, decentralization, individualization, division, splitting, discord, brokenness and absence.
- <sup>18</sup> They include integration, consolidation, reassembly, unification, consensus, cohesion, flexibility, unbrokenness, synthesis, convergence, dividuality, stabilization, organicity, redemption, reconciliation, oneness, certainty, community, connection, fusion, completion, continuity, holism, solidity, reconstruction, unity, interdependence, solidarity, coherence, linearity, totality, balance, formulation and maturity. These synonyms were located on the same three electronic databases as were the synonyms for “wholeness.”
- <sup>19</sup> An examination of seven electronic databases revealed 3,550 listings for “fragmentation” and only 1,422 for “wholeness.”
- <sup>20</sup> Because neither Reinshagen’s nor Hernández’s novels have been translated into English, all translations here are my own.
- <sup>21</sup> One obvious reason why these novels were translated into English is that prior novels by both these authors generated tremendous sales figures, both in Spanish and in English (as well as other) translations. Quality, therefore, was not the deciding factor in whether or not they were translated into English. Hernández’s *Almeida: Danzón*, however, did do brisk business in Mexico, yet has not, to date, been translated. Regardless of sales figures, all of these works are intended to be literary novels. *La ley de amor* quickly found its way to the bargain bins. Will a third novel by this author, should she publish one, be translated as quickly?

## CHAPTER 1: THEORIES OF FRAGMENTATION IN PHILOSOPHY AND IN LITERATURE

Fragmentation may be the pervasive malaise of the twentieth century, a cultural anxiety that shows no signs of diminution as we pass into the twenty-first century. Fragmentation is the knowledge of the self as splintered or divided rather than whole, as multiple rather than singular, as disjoint rather than unified. The self finds no recognizable continuity among the various components of said self, no cohesion among attributes, no connection among elements. Fragmentation of the individual (of the psyche) is the inner fear or perception that one has no center, that there is no unifying principle that would make one a coherent or continuous self. Fragmentation is marked by anxiety, by fear, sometimes by desperation, often by feelings of alienation and isolation or brokenness. These feelings can leave one unquiet and restless, angry and desperate, or resigned and aimless. The self may experience so much inner incoherence and disjointedness that, despite all the multitude and variety within, what it feels is emptiness: emptiness of order, of meaning, of sense. Fragmentation of the individual (of the psyche) is the inner fear or certainty that one has no center, that there is no unifying principle that would make one a coherent or continuous self. Fragmentation is marked by anxiety, by fear, sometimes by desperation, often by feelings of alienation and isolation or brokenness. These feelings can leave one unquiet and restless, angry and desperate, or resigned and aimless. The self may experience so much inner incoherence and disjointedness that, despite all the multitude and variety within, what it feels is emptiness: empty of order, of meaning, of sense<sup>1</sup>. There is a lack of unity, an absence of belonging or supportive relationship. But it is only possible to perceive this condition and identify it as fragmentation because we recognize what unity is.

Fragmentation is more defined by absence and lack than by its own unique characteristics. It is the splintering of the whole, the absence of unity, the lack of cohesion. “In a cultural vacuum, a fragment cannot be seen,” writes scholar Paul C. Ray in his 1980 article “On Fragments and Fragmentation” (225). Apart from the concept of ‘whole’ there is no ‘fragment.’

Many who write on the subject trace the beginnings of the culture of fragmentation to the nineteenth century, while others view it as a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon. Some even locate its remotest roots in the Enlightenment. There is common agreement, however, that people of today often believe that Western cultures and Western peoples prior to the 1800s saw the world and their place in it as a continuous, unified whole, and that this is no longer true in the Western world. What changes in recent Western history could have brought about this change in perception, then, of how one sees oneself and the world? What societal elements led to the perception of the self and the world as disjointed, discontinuous and multiple? What are the cultural features that precipitate this description? What varieties of human response result?

One of those who believes that the historical influences of modern disjunction (I use the term “modern” not in the literary sense which would divide the twentieth century into “modern” and “postmodern” eras, but rather in the sense of belonging to or being associated with the automated age) can be traced back to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment is Robert Jay Lifton, a former professor who founded and directs the Center on Violence and Human Survival in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, and who is the author of more than fifteen volumes on the general topic of human survival. He locates the beginnings of these characteristics in this early period as the time when “a supreme faith in the rational and the scientific, constituting an intense ‘sacralization of the secular’” (15) took place. Despite what he views as its historical roots, he points out that fragmentation

“[a]s a generally shared experience ... is essentially a twentieth-century phenomenon. Only in this — and presumably the next — century does the pattern of psychological multiplicity and change take hold in everyone” (16). In his book *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*, published in 1993, Lifton describes the environment faced by the modern individual:

Leaders appear suddenly, recede equally rapidly, and are difficult for us to believe in when they are around. We change ideas and partners frequently, and do the same with jobs and places of residence. Enduring moral convictions, clear principles of action and behavior: we believe these must exist, but where? Whether dealing with world problems or child rearing, our behavior tends to be ad hoc, more or less decided upon as we go along. We are beset by a contradiction: schooled in the virtues of constancy and stability — whether as individuals, groups, or nations — our world and our lives seem inconstant and utterly unpredictable. (1)

He then lists what he considers to be the three principal historical influences of fragmentation. These are “the dislocations of rapid historical change, the mass media revolution, and the threat of human extinction,” all of which “have undergone an extraordinary acceleration during the last half of the twentieth century, causing a radical breakdown of prior communities and sources of authority” (3). It is change and the rapid pace of change that is at the root of two of these three attributes Lifton views as the causes of modern fragmentation, and which he proceeds throughout the text to break down into a number of contributing factors.

As examples of these rapid changes, Lifton cites the end of the cold war and, with it, the loss of a “world-clarifying enemy” (33), post communist chaos in parts of Europe, civil wars in the former Yugoslavia and in several parts of Africa, economic fluctuations

that create uncertainty, as well as crime, problems surrounding the question of race, drugs, breakdowns in education and health care and distrust of institutions. Over the past two centuries, there has been “a general acceleration of historical change and the displacement of unprecedented numbers of human beings: émigrés and immigrants from anywhere to somewhere else, whether as refugees from war or political or economic duress, or as people caught up in the trials and possibilities of mass urbanization and flight from that urbanization” (17) What results is dislocation and plurality. “Historical (or psychohistorical) dislocation consists of the breakdown of social and institutional arrangements that ordinarily anchor human lives,” he points out. “The dislocation can be brutal, as in wars, epidemics, and the many forms of murder and cruelty human beings have inflicted upon each other,” (14) but it can also be peaceful and voluntary. In either case, the result is the absence of the familiar and the confusion associated with trying to navigate the unknown.

In addition to a sense of rootlessness, sensations of emptiness, absence, loss and meaninglessness may also result. In fact, feelings of homelessness and fatherlessness are not uncommon, even in family settings in which the father is physically present. Where destructive family dynamics are not operative, Lifton attributes these feelings to what he calls *generationalism*, that is, “the expectation that each generation will move beyond and away from the previous one” (79). The voluntary or involuntary casting off of the father contributes to feelings of separation and anxiety, even in instances where the individual continues to draw significantly on his or her origins while simultaneously rejecting some part of them.

Lifton includes the industrial revolution among the upheavals that have contributed to dislocation and relocation of people, as it was the increasing mechanization of industry and the creation of factory jobs that drew waves of people to the cities. The resulting

congested mixture of immigrants, refugees and transplanted country folk crammed into close quarters, often with inadequate services to support their numbers, could seem both colorful and threatening. The variety present in such settings almost defies description and for most of the people involved, such diversity is unfamiliar and unsettling.

But if the frequency of disruption and relocation (whether due to war, epidemic, natural disaster or economics) is not as great as we perceive it to be, it is that modern methods of communication have allowed us to be aware of the extent and frequency with which it occurs. Thus, the perception is that human beings are almost continually uprooted, and patterns of relocation in countries not at war do nothing to dispel this idea. Even within stable, peaceful economies, movement is constant as economic opportunities are pursued that require physical relocation. For those few who do not leave the communities of their birth, the neighborhood around them is continually changing as people move in and out. The loss of a sense of home can be psychological, as well as geographical, and can contribute to the overall sense that a center is lacking. Lifton remarks that when “change is too rapid and extreme to be readily absorbed; it then impairs symbol systems having to do with family, religion, social and political authority, sexuality, birth and death, and the overall ordering of the life cycle” (14).

The media are a central player in the perception of self and society as fragmented, Lifton maintains. In addition to its role in creating an awareness of the pace and amount of physical change, the media today causes the human being to feel bombarded with both images and information, and it exists in a variety of forms unimagined two centuries ago. There seems to be no escape from the relentless flow of information, not all of which is reliable. Television, films, radio, books, newspapers, theater, billboards and advertisements in almost every imaginable form (including on the clothes that we wear) pound the human senses. The amount of information available may convince the individual

that not only does s/he know nothing, but that ever knowing any substantive part of what there is to know is impossible. Others become convinced that they may only claim to be knowledgeable themselves if they specialize in a narrowly defined area, to the exclusion of most else. Either response only confirms or increases feelings of fragmentation.

Lifton speaks of “the trivializing and distorting effects of the media” (17) and points out that “[w]hat seems most important is not so much the specific character of an individual medium as the staggering array of images and ideas coming from all media — television, radio, and the press — bombarding us from all sides” (18). This overwhelming media presence, perhaps due to sheer volume, maintains what Lifton describes as a “static authority” (79) in our lives, despite our recognition that we must critically analyze its messages. This results in a trend away from both individuation and community as increased superficial homogeneity in isolation become normative.

The social trend away from religion and toward faith in science in Western societies also plays a part in the perceived breakdown. The capability via science and technology to extinguish ourselves and our entire species fuels an imagery of annihilation. The combination of atomic weapons and the media habit of broadcasting wars around the globe live practically as if they were television programs are responsible for the silence that Lifton views as the comparable opposite of the white noise of the media, namely, “our late-twentieth-century technological capacity to annihilate ourselves as a species, and doing so with neither purpose nor redemption” (21). War today is always fought under a nuclear shadow, a psychologically oppressive burden as the modern nation-state is no longer perceived to be able “to protect its citizens from technological danger (from advanced weaponry and pollution) ...” (221). In addition, homelessness and fatherlessness, both actual and psychological, are augmented by war.

“[C]ontemporary men and women,” states Lifton, “exist in a psychological landscape void of clear authority or viable community ...” (17). The traditional community, which he defines as “the enduring, close-knit human group in a particular geographical area, with common purposes within which individual desires are significantly subsumed” (103) has practically vanished. “[M]ore a nostalgic ideal than an actuality,” (103) any sense of community today tends to be only partial and usually temporary. This, too, contributes to a sense of loss, setting the brain’s symbolizing function adrift and prompting questioning of how feelings should be interpreted. “[W]hen social arrangements break down ...” Lifton writes, “everything becomes highly uncertain, and the free-floating potential of all emotions is drawn upon and extended. Hence, we lose much of the classical distinction between fear (involving a genuine threat) and anxiety (a vague foreboding)” (101).

The development or discovery of psychoanalysis, in Lifton’s view, is “a manifestation, rather than a cause” (24) of fragmentation, a response to “a widespread fear of falling apart” (27). Freud’s psychic division of the self into id, ego and superego was, he maintains, reflective of the beleaguered state felt by Western beings in the late nineteenth century. Lifton lists some of the various descriptive terms that arose from the psychoanalytic movement, in its attempt to describe what was happening to self-image within the human psyche. These include “the saturated self,” “the empty self,” “possible selves,” “the decentralized identity,” “the quantum self,” and “multimind” (27), terms that more often reflect anxiety than confidence.

Where Lifton locates the beginnings of twentieth-century fragmentation in the Enlightenment, Robert M. Greenberg, Professor of English at Temple University in Philadelphia, is one of the many scholars who trace the path of modern discord back to the nineteenth century, specifically to European Romanticism, a literary movement that

established the fragment as a valid literary form. In his 1993 volume, *Splintered Worlds*, Greenberg points out that, in addition to increasing industrialization, the nineteenth century also saw the spread of urbanization, the fracturing of the Protestant church into dozens of different denominations (which he attributes, to a great degree, to the revivalists) and the rise of diversity as a paradigm. In addition, he lists conflicts over slavery, free-soil, nativism and immigration as contributing factors.

Greenberg also holds democracy responsible. “The multitudinous image of democracy glimpsed on the streets of cities, the segmenting of religion as a result of revivalism, the rise of empiricism, and the conflicting view of romantic idealism plunged many individuals into a whirlpool of shifting perspectives” (4). The reason Greenberg holds democracy — as a model and a practice — partially responsible for the fragmentation we experience today is that it broke down traditional norms and patterns. Under the terms of democracy, each individual, regardless of social status, was entitled to his or her (initially only his) own opinion and had the right to express it. Neither practical nor abstract matters were off limits to even the humblest of individuals and where democracy and the United States were concerned, there were no conflicting centuries of tradition to retard “an endorsement of the wide diversity of standards (or lack of standards) of the masses”<sup>2</sup> (6). The result, according to Greenberg, was that “[a]s guiding ideals in art and life, variety replaced uniformity, difference replaced universality, natural dynamism replaced fixed forms, and spontaneity replaced mechanical rules” (4). This near reversal of guideposts, understandably, resulted in confusion and upheaval.

“[T]he pressing multiplicity of issues and media utilized for debate,” come in for their share of responsibility, as “[g]reater capital investment and new technologies in publishing had resulted in a rapid increase in the number of books, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets” (7). The media thus magnified the diversity of public opinion

in an ever-increasing blitz of words and images. These materials were mostly to be found where the masses were, and these “masses” were increasingly to be found in cities, which were ever growing in population.

The contrast with rural life is profound. Where the farm family lives in physical isolation from others but knows well their few, distant neighbors, the urban dweller often feels more intensely isolated within the surrounding sea of strangers. Village dwellers may feel bound to each other by multiple ties of relationship and experience which, combined with persistent social pressure, yield commonality. Difference is difficult to overlook, however, when large groups of people live in close proximity to each other. On the one hand, because the city attracts people of many different backgrounds and traditions, the existence of difference between peoples becomes obvious where the likelihood of social pressure producing cohesion is slim. On the other hand, as Greenberg points out, difference “is often deliberately accentuated so as to stand out from the crowd and compete with other claims for distinction” (19).

The sheer volume and variety of the city and its proximity to the self is overwhelming. In Greenberg’s words, there are “too many instances, too much new detail, and too little frame for any subject. ... Little is containable on the basis of fixed subjects, classes, neighborhoods, limits, traditions” (25). There is also constant physical change, as buildings are demolished and new buildings erected, with no more respect given objects of the past than that received by tradition, prior ideas, historical principles or former ideals.

In addition, Greenberg points out, urban life results in “the loss of nature” (202) which is also a disturbance to an individual’s sense of location in and relationship to the natural world. When this is coupled with theories of evolution which arose during the nineteenth century and with what Greenberg views as the splintering of religion into

multiple denominations, the individual is entirely unsettled from his or her place in both space and time.

And Greenberg also references the fact that, concurrent with the rise of democracy and increasing urbanization, print media exploded. This, he points out, was due to new technologies that reduced cost and eased production, making dissemination of varying opinions to the ever greater numbers of closely crowded persons cheaper and easier. The effect was to increase the space of public consciousness, create an awareness of multiplicity, and unleash the flood of information which hounds us today.

Diversity as a reigning cultural paradigm was thus the product of valuing each individual's opinion equally, of urbanization and the dissemination of many of those contending and often conflicting opinions. The effect was, according to Greenberg, that "[a]s guiding ideals in art and life, variety replaced uniformity, difference replaced universality, natural dynamism replaced fixed forms, and spontaneity replaced mechanical rules" (4).

This statement is phrased in a positive manner, reflecting the fact that the results of the changes delineated need not be viewed solely as threatening. The resulting enabling idea under which we in the Western world live today, Greenberg describes as "diversitarianism," that is, "a way of envisioning the deep structure of reality as a shifting fragmentariness, characterized by metamorphosis, changing ratios of subject and object, and indeterminacy" (8). The upshot is that one must contend with diversity "not only as an artistic problem, but as a philosophical problem (relativism and uncertainty) and as a social and psychological problem (multiplicity of cultural viewpoints and selves)" (10). Despite his prior acknowledgment that this "diversitarianism" can be liberating in aspect, Greenberg's words here underline that the more common human response is to find fragmentation problematic.

Greenberg touches on Darwin's theories of the mid-1800s and Freud's later (twentieth-century) postulations<sup>3</sup> on the human psyche as also contributing to our "splintered worlds" today. Darwinism ruptured the picture of the human being as elevated above animals by a spiritual nature lacking in them, by linking humans directly with the animal kingdom as an evolutionary product thereof. The irony came in linking humanity more closely with the natural world, just as the move to an urban environment actually produced a loss of nature or the loss of a relationship with nature<sup>4</sup>. Freudianism, in turn, punctured the conception of the human as a rational creature by unveiling the diverse drives that controlled the psyche. This was a profound and unsettling change in human self-concept, one which led to the further disappearance of familiar institutions and ideas. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Greenberg states:

[D]isappearing are the governing elites and the small, familiar cities and towns; gone is the comfortable relationship between reason and religion; gone is the idea of the spiritually unified self. In their place are competing religious denominations and sects, myriad foreign and native populations, transcendental philosophical intuitions, prebiblical discoveries in geology and paleontology, and an emerging reductivism and materialism in psychology. (195)

This resulting fragmentation, he divides into two types. "Segmentary fragmentation," he defines as "[b]eing awash in variety without any unifying principle ..." while "atomistic fragmentation," is "being chilled with isolation by one's unique individuality ..." (9). The result of constant multiplicity may either be to identify with so many different forms or beliefs that self-shredding is the result, or, feeling unconnected from the whole, as there may seem to be no linking elements, the response may be isolation and disconnection, a total lack of identification.

Dennis Brown, principal lecturer in English at Hatfield Polytechnic, novelist and author of *The Modernist Self in Twentieth-Century English Literature: A Study in Self-Fragmentation* (1989), also locates the roots of fragmentation in the nineteenth century, specifically, as far back as the Victorian Age. The chief causes of twentieth-century fragmentation, particularly as they influence its expression in literature, he lists as found in “the general diffusion of social alienation, the rise of the psychoanalytic movement, the disorientation brought about by the shock of the Great War and the increasing experimentalism of almost all the contemporary artistic movements” (1). He traces much of the terminology used to describe this modern malaise to either the battle experience [“‘fall apart’, ‘break down’, ‘disintegrate’, ‘shock’, ‘fragmentation’” (43)] or to the psychoanalytic movement [“the Unconscious, repression ... censorship” (109)]. Among the disillusioning and self-destructive forces at work during the WWI experience that Brown includes are, “[t]he unexpected scale of mechanisation, the gulf between home and front, the general ‘proletarianisation’ of front-line labour, the long confinements underground, the suppression of aggressive impulses in a war of defence” (50). These forces rendered of the coherent [male] ego a ‘hollow man,’ the first general manifestation of the general uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity that was to sweep over the century.

Brown’s focus is primarily on fragmentation in relationship to the self (as expressed in works of modernist literature in the English language), although grounded in the assumption that it is an experience shared by many selves in whom feelings of isolation are part of the general sense of fragmentation. The very term “fragmentation” suggests “a selfhood which is pluralist, heterogeneous and discontinuous” and “presupposes some kind of pre-existent unity which is in the process of being broken down. That unity constitutes a model of selfhood which is autonomous, integral and continuous .... Such self-wholeness had been a normative assumption (and indeed a construction) of most

cultural discourse up until the Modernist movement” (2). This is also the period from which he dates language skepticism and therefore wide experimentation with language. An awareness of the human being as self-deceiving, conflicted and inconsistent translated itself onto the page.

This view of the sources of modern fragmentation overlaps with that of two prominent feminist theorists, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who, in their three volume study, *No Man's Land*, also identify the roots of twentieth-century anxiety and dissolution with “the discontents fostered by an industrial civilization, with the enemies within the self that were defined by Freud, and ultimately with the no man’s land of the Great War” (21). In their view, however, art is not mentioned as a source of fragmentation, while the rise of Darwinism and consequent weakening of religion, which Brown does not even allude to, does play a major role. But their primary contribution to an understanding of the sources of fragmentation is to focus attention on the momentous change in relations between the sexes and the role of women in society as contributing to the general sense of discontinuity, while acknowledging that the rise of women was fostered both by the Great War (which produced a need for women’s work outside the home while the men were away fighting) and by Freud’s theories (which, intentionally or not, removed barriers to female expression of desire and expanded the realm of its experience). While Brown alludes to “a ‘feminisation’ of the masculinist ego ...” as the result of “the new male emphasis on splitting, emotional confusion and anguished helplessness ...” (74), it is Gilbert and Gubar who clearly explain how the rise of women contributed to the psychic dislocations that lie at the base of the phenomenon under examination here.

Women, who in the Western world had for centuries been restricted by patriarchal culture to the limitations of the male imagination, began to envision alternate options and

alternative journeys for themselves and to act upon an evolving sense of self that refused to conform to male expectations and male definitions. The resulting enormous social change in behavior was destabilizing to both males and females. The threat to patriarchal mandate was real and men fought (and continue to fight) the change. For women, the slow, but continual release from the corset stays of male control was heady and liberating, but formless. There were virtually no role models for self-defined women, other than the stuff of legend. Their mothers and grandmothers could not guide them. Although the change in this case was welcomed as positive, it was accompanied by the disorientation, confusion, the sense of a lack of firmament that is a component of modern fragmentation.

The suffrage movement, followed by women's entry into the workforce, which was necessitated by World War I, coupled with increasing educational opportunities for women and the availability of information and technology pertaining to birth control, all contributed to women's empowerment. Where World War I had opened the workplace to women, "the Depression assaulted already fragile male egos by threatening to undermine the economic power of the traditional husband-as-breadwinner. In addition, World War II tended to intensify a male sense of peril, and ... it simultaneously fostered a contempt for women as sexual objects ... and an ambivalence toward the mothers and sweethearts who were presumed to be safe at home" (46). Although the 1950s may have seemed a resolution or normalization of relations between men and women and a reassumption of defined roles in the home and society, it was only a pause in the struggle.

[T]he so-called "second wave" of feminism, which began in the late 1960s and burgeoned in the 1970s and 1980s, was at least as disturbing to men as the first wave had been, for proponents of women's liberation were now demanding considerably more than the political power emblemized by the vote: they were asserting, and often achieving, professional, economic, and sexual equality —

and sometimes they even appeared, to their nervous male contemporaries, to be claiming superiority. (46)

The result, for men, has been an intense fear of emasculation that has contributed to their sense of fragmentation felt by men.

Where women, although without landmarks, were eager for release from the paucity of options available to them and welcomed, albeit not without confusion, what Gilbert and Gubar refer to as “a whole wardrobe of selves” from which to choose, the male sense of place in the universe was unsettled, the male imagination confounded. Men correctly perceived their power as eroded when that power was no longer automatically extended over women, and this change destabilized the masculine ego. A fundamental relationship that had been unquestioningly accepted by men as fact, as truth, was revealed to be a fiction. At the same time, doubt was being cast on men’s relationship with God (by Darwinism) and on the unity of the self (by psychoanalysis). The old center no longer held, and there was no new center or substitute with which to replace it.

George W. Morgan, professor emeritus of philosophy at Brown University, belongs to the camp that views the fragmented human condition as a product of this century, specifically, as emerging out of the two world wars. In his 1968 work, *The Human Predicament: Dissolution and Wholeness*, he outlines the five elements that he considers most contribute to our contemporary dissolution: “the diminution of understanding; the destruction of language; the nullification of values; man’s [sic] loss of nature, his [sic] fellow [sic] man [sic], and learning and art; and the reduction and fragmentation of the person” (x). Morgan devotes a chapter to each, from which I shall attempt to summarize the central ideas.

“The diminution of understanding” refers to the glorification of one type of knowing at the price of “understanding as a whole” (3) in which reason is no longer

considered the proper standard by which ideas are measured. The development of psychology, Morgan maintains, with its “emphasis on irrational mental factors” (7) called reason, as a form of understanding oneself and the world, into question. It has been replaced in the twentieth-century, he maintains, by the scientific method or approach and its “insistence on anchoring thought in what is actually observed in nature” (9). This has had the effect of dissolving poetry, history, theology, philosophy, etc. as forms of thought through which to understand the world and one's place in it. The response by those who work within certain of the rejected fields of understanding has been to try to make them over into sciences. “[T]here is no realm,” he states, “that has not been subjected to the attempt either to reconceive it along scientific lines or to deny it all cognitive power” (12).

Technology, the offspring of science, has also gained the confidence of the modern being. The result is suspicion of all forms of knowledge and understanding not rooted in science and technology, despite the inadequacies of the scientific method to address or respond to all questions proffered by the human psyche. Almost as an afterthought, Morgan notes that modern pressures to produce, or at least to engage in, “ceaseless activity” (16) results in a lack of time for thought and that this, coupled with the flood of knowledge bombarding the modern individual, the sheer volume of which “inflicts a paralyzing sense of impotence,” results in the mind “restricting its activity to a narrowly circumscribed field in which it can feel secure,” and leaves the individual “feeling unable to gain a valid perspective on the world and himself [sic]”(17). The individual responds by regarding both the world and him- or herself “as consisting of innumerable isolated parts to be relinquished for knowledge and control to a legion of experts” (17). Thus human understanding is diminished, as is human comprehension of the world and the self.

“[T]he destruction of language” is related to the diminution of understanding, according to Morgan, in that “language is reason’s principal instrument” (18). In addition,

the individual living in the twentieth century is well aware that language can be used to distort facts, obscure truth or confuse judgment. Nazi leaders wrote of “the final solution” when they meant the wholesale murder of a people. Advertisers tout a broad variety of products as certain to improve one’s sex life and prestige through mere ownership. Government officials use language as subterfuge, and business people speak of “downsizing” when they mean layoffs<sup>5</sup>. Combining the properties of language which allow it to be turned to such dubious uses with the component of doubt, which is the basic tenet of the scientific approach, the resulting suspicion of language should come as no surprise. Thus, according to Morgan, the modern mind views language as serving two different functions; that of “objective” knowledge, for which purpose it should be “stark, sterile, and devoid of power and style,” and that of “the personal interest of the writer,” to which end it may “use all means and artifices” (21). Morgan points out that while “[i]t is true that history has been falsified and distorted, unwittingly and deliberately ... it is killed if one tries to write it like physics” (24). This division of the function of language into two rigid categories has the effect of further reducing knowledge and understanding, and has paralyzing consequences for human communication in daily life.

What Morgan means by “the nullification of values” involves the edification of doubt as a principal approach to knowledge, the corresponding attack on religion, the blind preference for that which is new, the spread of indifference in response to the feelings of impotence noted above, and widespread awareness that values vary with the culture, leading to the perception that all values are subjective. In like manner, the scientific approach “considers how things are “in fact,” but not whether they are good or bad” (32). Further, with the acceptance of the scientific mode of knowledge as the sole legitimate route to understanding, the question of values is trivialized. Today, “[t]o believe that something is valuable now merely means that one likes it” (34), a belief furthered by anthropological

studies and the doctrine of cultural relativism, which holds “that values are relative to each society, and their justification is simply the fact of their being held by a people ...” (30). Lacking values, it is difficult to make choices. Lacking values, the human being is left feeling rootless and without an anchor in a sweeping sea of changes.

The losses Morgan names — of nature, of each other, of learning and art — are part of the cause of the fragmentation of the modern age, and he packages them under the heading “loss of the world” (41). By this he means, as he explains in Chapter 4, that the human being today “has no genuine ties” (41). The flight to cities and suburbs has removed us from nature, and nature has come to be viewed as valuable solely for its place in technology. We have been cut off from genuine relationships with each other, Morgan maintains, via “our dependence on mechanical devices” (45), the use of which decreases the occasions of human meeting. The nullification of values contributes to this estrangement from each other and encourages the viewpoint that human beings, as well as nature, exist so that they may be used and manipulated for various purposes. The destruction of language likewise aids in this weakening of human ties, as neither technical jargon nor what remains of commonplace prose are capable of serving to build relationships.

Morgan also blames “specialism” (his term) for our loss of each other, citing the fact that specialism further reduces commonality by creating an environment in which one “cannot possibly comprehend more than one or two specialized fields. With each field being accessible only to its specialist practitioners, it cannot contribute to the spiritual life of anyone else” (51). The result is that “[e]xperts speak only to experts; the fruit of each man’s [sic] work is for a few confreres” (53). Specialism also bears part of the blame for the loss of learning and art, he maintains, and thereby, he claims, we have lost culture in general. “The chief reason for this loss is that we no longer look upon culture as some

kind of whole that an individual can grasp. It has become a collection of innumerable isolated pursuits of the mind and of their infinity of disconnected products” (50). Art is no longer comprehensible to the general populace, but requires the interpretation of specialists. He is quick to acknowledge, however, that “[c]reation in every realm requires selection, and in this respect all activity is specialized; the issue is the degree of specialization and the spirit in which it is carried on” (51), hence, his use of the term “specialism” to distinguish today’s form of specialization from that which is inevitable and nondestructive.

Finally, Morgan views “the reduction and fragmentation of the person” or, as he also terms it, “the dissolution of the whole and unified person” as “[t]he culmination of our predicaments” (61). “Man’s [sic] every activity is more and more modeled after the machine,” he claims, “— standardized, automatic, and repeatable” (61). While the author allows that the release of the human being from certain forms of work is desirable, he also perceives a pervasive trend toward automatism that contributes to the general sense of fragmentation, in that it strips work of meaning and purpose. Increasingly, Morgan states, we neither live nor work “in a community in which our presence counts and is felt” (66), and it is the impersonality of our environment that stifles us. Harkening back to Lifton, he states: “The enormity of all organizations and institutions, the hugeness of the political apparatus, the appalling rush of events, and the unthinkable powers of extermination that constantly hover over us, all threaten to crush us into impotence. And not only the dimensions but also the impersonality of our environment stifles us” (66).

Our work generally requires that we suppress our feelings, and our inner life, and their exclusion from so much of our daily life yields human beings ashamed of our feelings and of ourselves for having them. This leads, in turn, to atrophy in the emotional side of life. The exclusion of emotion from the daily field of endeavor includes the suppression of compassion, sensitivity, sympathy and empathy, as well as of anger, bitterness, hate and

other so-called negative or destructive emotions. But because emotions will find an outlet, Morgan views society as having provided contrived emotional safety valves, in the form of the entertainment industry (in which I would also include professional sports), where sentimentality and fabricated excitement permit a release of emotion.

The result of this combination of modern fragmenting forces, Morgan writes, is an individual that

often has no real awareness of self, of a oneness of person, but feels himself [sic] to be constituted of disunited parts, each of which he [sic] surrenders for explanation and for direction to an appropriate specialist. He [sic] has little experience of his [sic] own identity. He [sic] lacks the sense of being an integral *I*, a complex but whole self with its own center and unity that would enable him [sic] to enter into relation with otherness, with the world. He [sic] tends instead to become a formless entity, an amorphous conglomerate, a bundle of fragments whose every part and movement is subjected to external forces — either material circumstances and social pressures or the controls proceeding from specialism.

(68)

In fact, he maintains, “[W]e have so lost sight of wholeness that we hardly know what a whole person is and therefore what to strive for” (69).

Clearly, there is a great deal of agreement as to the causes of fragmentation, even where its historical roots remain in dispute. The rise of science as a contributing factor is cited by Brown, Morgan and Greenberg, while the media explosion is noted by the latter two as well as by Lifton. Morgan, along with Gilbert and Gubar, mark the diminished influence of religion as a contributing factor, as does Greenberg, although he stresses that the authority of religion has become diminished by splintering into countless denominations and belief strains rather than by intellectual dismissal. The rise of psychoanalytic theory

plays a part, according to all six, although Lifton views it as a “manifestation” of fragmentation rather than as one of its causes. Mechanization or industrialization is likewise noted by all, but there is less agreement on other contributing factors. Darwin’s theories are cited by Greenberg and Gilbert and Gubar, but are not referred to by the others. Both Lifton and Morgan specifically highlight the omnipresent threat of self-extinction as one outgrowth of science and technology that has aided psychic fracture. Brown to a minimal extent, but primarily Gilbert and Gubar refer to changing gender roles as a source of discontinuity, and both Morgan and Brown call attention to the modern awareness of skeptical properties of language. Greenberg and Lifton cite immigration and urbanization as influences or causes of disjunction, while Greenberg and Morgan list the loss of nature as a fundamental factor. Brown is the only one to view experimentalism in art as a cause rather than a manifestation of fragmentation, while Greenberg alone lists democracy among the causes, and only Morgan refers to accelerated specialization as a contributing factor. The result, all agree, are feelings of estrangement and alienation from others, from the world and from the self.

George W. Morgan and Robert Jay Lifton, along with Dennis Brown, do more than document examples of fragmentation in literature. In their respective works cited, they document and discuss several of the many possible responses to this modern condition, as they observe them in society and art. The human response when faced with “multiplicity to the point of fragmentation” (8), is sometimes a condition which Lifton refers to as “proteanism,” which is manifested in what he terms the “protean self,” something he views as an encouraging reaction and an optimistic response to conditions that often seem overwhelming<sup>6</sup>. “Proteanism” he defines as “a sense of self that can be fluid and multiple” (28) while still feeling grounded. It is “a balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other” (9). Further, “[t]he

essence of the protean self lies in its odd combinations. There is a linking — often loose but functional — of identity elements and subselves not ordinarily associated with one another ...” (50). This is possible through the brain’s symbolizing function, which is capable of associating disparate ideas and images with each other in — at least briefly — meaningful ways.

The protean self, Lifton explains, is manifested in at least three ways: It is sequential, “a changing series of involvements with people, ideas, and activities”; simultaneous, able to hold at one time “even antithetical images and ideas ... each of which it may be more or less ready to act upon”; and it is social, involving “highly varied forms of self-presentation” (8). In fact, he insists, “variation is the essence of the protean self” (5). In addition, this protean process, in one or more of its three manifestations, is continuous. There are no periods of stasis, no arrival at a target destination.

This lack of firmament effects several aspects of human life. “The emotions of the protean self tend to be free-floating, not clearly tied to cause or target. Not just individual emotions but communities as well may be free-floating — that is, “removed geographically and embraced temporarily and selectively, with no promise of permanence” (6). Such arrangements may ultimately prove to be unsatisfying, and Lifton admits that “[c]ommunity may well be the most grave problem facing the protean self ...” (103). Despite the actual experience of proteanism, that is, of continuous reconstruction of workable combinations, the protean self, according to Lifton, still seeks lasting connections “in intimate bonds with other people, in the life cycle, in larger links to history and nature, and in enduring ethical and religious principles” (120). Such bonds are pursued despite being suspicious of the potential for these very ties to become traps or barriers to experimentation. Thus, “they tend to be sought in ways that leave openings” (120).

In some respects this protean self, he maintains, also adopts the psychology of the survivor, insofar as there is a sense of “reconstituting the self in the face of ... loss” (81) and amidst feelings of anxiety, separation and threat. Other elements that the protean self shares with the survivor include a sense of failure to live up to her/his ideals concerning personal behavior vis-a-vis others and a general distrustfulness of those who offer help and engagement in a search for meaning. And, again like the survivor, the protean self shares “the sense of having undergone an experience that is illuminating in its pain” (82). The guilt of having survived where others were lost is often accompanied by a sense of triumph, of victory over adversity. Thus, proteanism itself is a conflictive, rather than peace-inducing response to psychic fragmentation.

The second reaction to modern discontinuity upon which Lifton elaborates is that which he terms “totalism” and which can be illustrated by both fundamentalism and nationalism. The former is understood as including “a literalized doctrine, religious or political, enclosed upon itself by the immutable words of the holy books. The doctrine is rendered both sacred in the name of a past of perfect harmony that never was, and the center of a quest for collective revitalization” (10). Nationalism often plays upon ethnicity as both a dividing and binding principle, and is clearly present as a factor in many of the wars fought during the 1990s. Literalism is a basic tenet of fundamentalism, as is rigidity of interpretation. Because such often proves stifling, a form of pressure release valves are often built into the structure, possibly taking the form of confession and absolution of sin, or the idea that an evil force, not ourselves, is responsible for our transgressions of fundamentalist strictures. This second safety valve is part of what ties totalism to violence as “it ever mobilizes for an absolute confrontation with designated evil, thereby justifying any actions taken to eliminate that evil” (202).

Proteanism and fundamentalism are opposite responses to the problem of fragmentation. “While proteanism is able to function in a world of uncertainty and ambiguity, fundamentalism wants to wipe out that world in favor of a claim to definitive truth and unalterable moral certainty” (11). Additionally, Lifton points out, “[P]roteanism presses toward human commonality, as opposed to the fixed and absolute moral and psychological divisions favored by fundamentalism” (11). The difference is in the degree of control one attempts to exert (or have imposed) over the forces and elements of the surrounding environment, both psychic and physical.

Totalism and proteanism are not the only examples of the human response to fracturing offered by Lifton. He also briefly cites psychic numbing, doubling and splitting as well as work entrapment and consumerism. While he does not elaborate on the latter two, Lifton does describe the other conditions adequately. Psychic numbing he defines as the “diminished capacity or inclination to feel” (208) which leads to an unengaged, withdrawn and apathetic being Lifton calls the “static self.” “This static self seeks by closure and numbing to block out much of the imagery and information available to it, to build a protective wall against all that questions or threatens its structure and content. In our time, the static self is especially likely to find meaning in technology and technique” (205). The result may be an absence of both form and motion, a sort of temporary death intended to prevent a permanent one. The dangers inherent in psychic numbing, Lifton points out “are not so much its one-dimensionality (it almost never stays that way) as its potential for extreme and destructive actions on behalf of overcoming that inner deadness and claiming some form of revitalization” (205). Thus both psychic numbing and totalism share a capacity for violence.

The doubling Lifton mentions as one possible human response to fragmentation “entails the formation of a functional second self that is, psychologically and morally, at

odds with the prior self” (208). This phenomenon is related both to psychic numbing in that it is another form of dissociation, and is similar to the ability many fundamentalists develop to adhere to literalist beliefs while retaining their capacity to reason. What it also shares with both of these other reactions is violence. “Doubling enables an ordinary or even generally decent person to become actively involved in a murderous project ...” (208). Akin to split personality, doubling is, from Lifton’s perspective, what allowed decent German people to commit atrocities under the Nazis.

When doubling is felt to be an insufficient response to stimulus, splitting may be the result. This extreme response, better known as multiple personality syndrome, is generally adopted, this scholar maintains, when one views the self as under the threat of self-disintegration. It is Lifton’s contention that even in circumstances of splitting, an overall self is still present, but has “surrendered its integrative function to the separate subselves. In that sense, the protean process has been literalized to the point of caricature, more or less stopped in time” (209). “[W]e can interpret the syndrome,” he asserts, “as evidence for the *requirement* of minimal integration and unity for adequate function of the self” (210).

Throughout, Lifton holds to the view that all of these responses to the decentralized, discontinuous modern world are part of a human search for something more satisfying and certainly, more secure. “One’s loss of a sense of place or location, of home — psychological, ethical, and sometimes geographical as well — can initiate searches for new “places” in which to exist and function. The protean pattern becomes a quest for “relocation,” an effort to overcome spiritual homelessness,” (14-15) he writes. The vicissitudes of loss, absence, threat, change and the sense of being adrift “can lead to confusion, and certainly to restlessness and flux. Yet they also provide strong motivation, and a certain content, for the self’s quest for form” (74). Art is also part of the search

itself, he contends, and not, as Brown would have it, one of the sources of fragmentation: “Words and images pertain less to clarity and truth than to the complexity of component parts and, above all, to the search” (67).

The quest is for “authenticity and coherence” (90), for “significant form” (91). But, Lifton cautions, “That quest can never quite be completed, but it can result in the achievement of what I call integrative expressions of proteanism” (74). One of his two proposed solutionary responses to the problem of fragmentation, Lifton defines integration here in the sense of “holding together, however loosely, disparate elements of self. It imposes priorities among these elements and the emotions they contain, and can include certain images and forms that are both enduring and energizing” (87). The emphasis is on balance, or what he refers to as “equipoise” and is associated with agility, flexibility and adaptation.

Lifton’s second possible answer to the modern situation is what he calls the development of a “species self,” an emphasis on human commonality with a focus on those life experiences that are shared: childbirth, lovemaking, work, pain, illness, death. “[E]mpathy,” he stresses, “is a key to species awareness ...” because empathy requires “that one include the other’s humanity in one’s own imagination” (214). In addition, “the species self incorporates premodern holism and spirituality, the modern quest for the universal, and the pluralism that has come to stamp the postmodern. In gender, the species self tends to include both “male” and “female” elements — that is, to move beyond narrow definitions of what it is to be either male or female and explore combinations of those elements” (231). The species self can be seen as integrative proteanism taken one step further, as integrative proteanism with a grounding agent. Thus, rather than the absence of self, which some see as the response to twentieth-century pressures, Lifton views the self

as that which seeks form, authenticity and meaning — and repeatedly finds some — amidst complexity and ambiguity.

Dennis Brown notes that one common human reaction to the dilemma of fragmentation is habit and ritual. He cites both “compulsive personal ritual” (151) and “a ritual appeal to the Eternal which depends on repetition” (153). Religious fundamentalism is not necessarily the form in which this occurs and, in fact, Brown does not offer specifics. One can as easily picture ritual as repetition within any moderate, mainstream religion as within the confines of fundamentalism. Habits and rituals, as noted here, need not have this connection with the eternal. While stabilizing, such actions can also, taken to the extreme, be evidence of mental illness<sup>7</sup>.

Another response is reliance on what Brown describes as “artificial identity props” (163), identification papers and cards as well as one’s signature. Compare briefly the list of such items generally carried today in a wallet or handbag with those whose bearer was in his or her prime at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is Brown’s contention that today we depend on paper and plastic as proof of identity, relying on external evidence where the internal is conflicted. He also contends that biography (and from my perspective, autobiography as well) are more prevalent than in the past, as these genres afford at least the illusion of ordering and giving meaning to one’s fragmentary life experiences.

The solution that Brown suggests is to reach for the spiritual. “The self can be meaningfully shaped in time only by what is not in time — God,” (149) he writes. What is proposed is “self-unmaking in the presence of the Eternal,” (154) which he carefully separates from both semi-enlightenment and sainthood. All that one can do, he suggests, “is trust in the eventuality of a final (Eternal) pattern and meaning — a matter of faith not knowledge. So the ‘redeemed’ self endures discontinuity in the expectation of a higher

order revealed outside of time ...” (157). Note that he is not proposing fundamentalism as a key to stabilizing the swirl of forces around us. On the contrary, Brown states, “[W]e can live with self-discontinuity because there is an absolute and unchanging Self beyond ‘our time’ and beyond human personality, into whom, and by whom, the repentant, self-acknowledging self can be subsumed” (158). Acknowledgment of the eternal permits one a sort of patience in which to deal with the now, without the present itself becoming any more coherent or secure than it was before. Unfortunately, he maintains, few of us are likely to grasp this solution. “It is a mark of our sceptical and fragmenting culture that such an optimism, based on faith, is not something many of us can share” (158). Brown believes that he has identified a counter to the problem of fragmentation, but one which the hallmarks of the problem itself are likely to obscure or impede.

George Morgan’s understanding of the human response to fragmentation is more fatalistic than is Lifton’s, less specifically theological than Brown’s, and although he, too, cannot resist suggesting solutions to the overall dilemma, he is less forceful in his machinations. Human reaction to the discontinuities and overwhelming multiplicity of forces produces a mental orientation or approach to the world Morgan terms “the prosaic mentality,” the hallmarks of which are “anti-intellectualism, impoverishment and abuse of language, impersonality and anonymity, alienation from nature and man [sic], specialism, and fragmentation of human existence” (82). The prosaic mentality is interested only in abstractions, numbers, methods, techniques and procedures, with the stress on a literalness that manifests discomfort with ambiguity. It values objectivity and fears any form of mental activity associated with the emotions. “[Q]uestions that do not lead to clear-cut operations in the physical world are meaningless [to the prosaic mentality] — and this renders meaningless most of our mental life” (89) writes Morgan, who goes on to point out that this manner of thinking also causes most modern beings to go no deeper than the

surface, when considering any given issue. “[D]espite the overwhelming effect that science has had, very few people are scientific” (81), he observes. The tendency is to pick out a few facts, bundle them together, number this package, label it and file it.

The prosaic being clings to what s/he understands as facts. “Knowledge of facts — no matter how isolated, irrelevant, or minuscule — becomes genuine knowledge; interpretation becomes prejudice” (88). Imagination is also condemned as being fanciful and disorderly. The prosaic mentality also places a stress on method and elevates the methodical as a means of meeting objectives. Activity replaces thought, as the prosaic mentality confuses activity with productivity. “Confronted with difficulty, the prosaic man [sic] gets busy ...” (90). These attributes lead to the holding of simplistic, pseudo-scientific views. The prosaic individual’s proclivity for anything that sounds scientific produces an unquestioning attitude of acceptance toward ideas presented in a scientific manner.

The prosaic mentality is an attempt to control a world that seems increasingly threatening and renders this individual, for all her/his supposed skepticism, either immobile or gullible to schemes that are packaged in a familiar fashion. It is reassuring to cling to science in that “science rests on the conviction that ordering principles *are* possible” (101). However, science also depends upon the consideration of variables within isolation or strict limits, an option that is not available — and which may not be useful — in dealing with the daily world around us. Science deals with the abstract in this sense, whereas the individual must at some point be able to apply abstractions to very concrete, if endlessly differing, situations. Science also relies on detachment or even removal from the world or elements studied, but detachment from life yields psychic numbing, Lifton’s temporary death, a transitory answer at best and possibly dangerous. Indeed, Morgan’s “prosaic mentality” is

directly comparable with Lifton's "static self," in its embrace of science and technology as a refuge.

Morgan suggests one look to history, rather than science, for a workable mental response to the problem of fragmentation. One attribute of history that recommends it as a mental model is that it "focuses attention on the particular, the individual, the unique," yet "is always viewed as occurring within a more general context" (121). In addition, attention is placed on the concrete, rather than prioritizing the abstract, and the emphasis is no longer limited to that which may be observed. History, he points out, also leaves room for judgment; in fact, it practically demands it. Conflicting documents must be weighed against each other and in context with their times. For a historian, "the events are related in the light of certain views, experiences, and evaluations; and furthermore, ... the meaning intended by the author is expressed through a much more complex and subtle use of language ..." (126). History reopens the door to values and respect for non-sterile forms of language. It is much more pluralistic than science, yet quasi-objective in that it is removed from the present day, and offers a set of generally adhered to guidelines in its practice. It also accepts and employs knowledge and laws derived from other areas, such as psychology, sociology, jus<sup>8</sup>, economics and anthropology. However, it may not provide the respite sought from the bombardment of images and ideas that science does. And history does not offer the security of repeatability that one has in the lab. In addition, while history includes a multitude of things that are not resolvable into thought (i.e. droughts, flood, earthquakes, plagues), history also depends extensively upon human-created sources: legal documents, journals, letters, speeches, newspapers, reports etc., which leaves it open to the very language skepticism that contributes to the disconnection for which a remedy is sought. Therefore, comparison and contrast are essential to history,

and the result of study is to arrive at “generalizations that indicate tendency” (160) rather than rules.

History, Morgan maintains, “requires twofold validity: On the one hand it must be in accord with the past; it must be an account of what was once real. This is what we usually mean by its truth. On the other hand, history must be effective for the present ...” (176). Because ours is a changing world, history must continually be reexamined and rewritten. Different views of the past are necessary for the comparison that produces knowledge from history. The knowledge produced by history, as well as its applicability to the present as a way of understanding the world, validates it as an authentic means by which knowledge is gained.

Morgan then makes a case for art as an embodiment of meaning in which the “meaning cannot be adequately stated independently from the work itself” (208). In my opinion, he could have defended the artistic (encompassing painting, sculpture, music and literature including drama and poetry) as an equally valid alternative mental model to science, and as a form of, or container for, knowledge and ways of knowing. Instead he seems to pursue the more modest goal of seeking to gain a foothold for art in the scientific world, tying art’s usefulness to the fact that it provokes a response in the hearer/reader/viewer.

Finally, he builds an argument for the adoption or validation of philosophy as an approach to knowledge, incorporating a defense of philosophy as a mental system into a chapter that compares history and philosophy, science and art. Philosophy is similar to history, he points out, in that “[r]eflection on any one subject reaches out to other subjects” (227). In addition, “[i]n philosophy, as in history, the subject matter has priority over method” (236). It is comparable with science in that it “tries to state universals” (246) and in the way that the particular serves as an example.

After having devoted one third of his book to describing fragmentation, its attributes and its causes, and a second third to detailing what he views as the most common human response to the situation, Morgan ends his work with a section asserting what he believes to be a solution to the problem. The modern human being, including the prosaic individual, Morgan maintains, is seeking some form of wholeness. What this means, he then attempts to describe over the course of the final three chapters. Whereas according to Lifton, the remedy is to develop a species self, a species consciousness, within the world of clashing cultures, the answer, for Morgan is wholeness.

When I reflect upon the ideas of these several scholars, I have no quarrel with the synthesis of what they believe to be the fundamental causes of twentieth-century fragmentation, other than with Brown's contention as to the role of art in reference to fragmentation. As I stated earlier, I am acting on the belief or assumption that literature — and art in general — reflects rather than produces societal currents<sup>9</sup>. But where the deepest roots of this modern malaise are in question, because I accept that both mechanization or industrialization have contributed to the overall sense of discontinuity, I must adhere to the views of those who maintain that the germination of fragmentation today is to be found prior to the twentieth century. The industrial age began in England in the nineteenth century and Darwin began publishing in the mid-1800s, hence at the very least the phenomenon must have nineteenth-century roots. Not surprisingly, the effects of mechanization would be felt most broadly and intensely during the century that followed its introduction, especially in combination with the other destabilizing forces.

Although the historical occurrences noted above had their inception in the northern hemisphere of the Western world, their influence rapidly spread throughout all of the Western world until, by the end of the twentieth century it is felt to varying degrees in nearly every corner of the globe. Darwinism, Freudianism, mechanization and the

changing role of women are present at the very least as an undercurrent in most urban societies today. Media presence and the accelerated pace of change that Lifton identified are also active in varying degrees. All of Western Europe, much of eastern Europe, all three countries of North America, the urban centers of South America, Australia and the great modern cities in Asia are most affected by these currents, although not uniformly, and this is reflected in the art arising out of them. The direct or trickle-down effect of these historical changes has been to produce a sense of fragmentation in the modern psyche that is broadly experienced throughout the Western world.

There is also literary evidence linking the early signs of fragmentation to the nineteenth century, found in the appearance of the *doppelgänger* or double as a fictional fixture, a figure that is seen by Dennis Brown as a precursor to the fragmented literary psyche of the following century<sup>10</sup>. Additional literary evidence is found in the artistic movement known as Romanticism, which began in Germany and spread throughout Europe. The German romantics employed the fragment as a literary technique as early as the very late *eighteenth* century<sup>11</sup>. The fragment as a literary form also makes its appearance in English poetry in the nineteenth century<sup>12</sup>. The split personality of the nineteenth century would become the splintered psyche of the twentieth and the fragment of the novel would become a novel-of-fragments.

The novel of the twentieth century reflects in various fashions both this disintegration of human community and the dislocations of the individual self. In the attempt to express and describe the modern (Western) human experience, new forms of the narrative arose from the creative imagination. Where the novel had once been defined by the linearity of chronological storytelling and by the general grammaticality of its characters' speeches, these new forms freed themselves from those traditions. Unity, totality and continuity which had long been literary norms, came to be seen by many

authors as exhausted means of expression that were inadequate for encapsulating the discontinuity of the times. There was an effort made to transcribe characters' thoughts directly, without shaping them for reason or coherence, but rather including every digression, repetition and self-deception common to actual human thought. Termed "stream of consciousness" writing, the form often eschewed quotation marks and challenged the reader to draw meaning from its apparent chaos. Contradictions within the self were highlighted, as was the presence of many 'selves' within a single character. The compression of thought was unlocked, as pages and pages were devoted to revealing the thoughts of a few moments. An attempt was made to express simultaneity of action, the lived experience of two different things happening to two different people, whether related or unrelated, at the identical moment.

Along with the simultaneous aspect of time, authors also explored the repetitive nature of both thought and speech, sometimes producing texts that were almost unreadable given the limits of human patience. Where the Victorian novel had frequently employed the double to express the split nature of the human psyche, a whole cast of characters was sometimes utilized for the same purpose in the twentieth-century novel. Where the Victorians had perceived a dual nature within, the interior being was increasingly written by the modernists as a multitude. This change was foreseen by Robert Louis Stevenson who, in his 1886 novella *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, produced these lines for the protagonist: "[M]an is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man [sic] will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" (79).

When not represented as a multitude, a character's fragmentation might be expressed as a disjointedness in time, with aspects of the self changing radically during the

progression from childhood to youth, young adulthood to middle age to the retirement years, while other aspects of selfhood remain only slightly modified, and the reflective self of memory, containing all past selves, relives his/her life in the plural<sup>13</sup>.

Authors tinkered with the continuity of the chapter, the paragraph, the sentence and even the word, in an effort to express the fractured discordance of both the society around them and the individual ego<sup>14</sup>. The fragment solidified into an accepted literary form, one that allowed the author to juxtapose contradictory thoughts and express plurality without further distortion of form. The number and diversity of voices and subjects increased. Voices that had been either stifled or lacking the resources necessary to reach an audience began to be heard, giving utterance to their perspectives in still more new forms.

Yet by its very nature, an authored work remains the result of an ordering principle. No matter how random the words or phrases on a page appear, their very presence is testimony to the selection and structuring hand and mind of an author. The illusion or representation of discontinuity, non linearity, even incoherence is revealed to be a construct of the author, to the same degree as is the coherent, developing self of the traditional novel. This is a necessity, as Robert M. Greenberg points out: “Without a subjective imaginative agency that includes a non materialist ordering principle, the fragmentary forces of culture would not find a form with which to manifest themselves; they would pile up layer upon layer of repetitive material” (12). I do not mean to imply, however, that the organizing principle behind the text need be a cohesive or unified ego. The fragmented psyche of a textual character may indeed be the product of the imagination of a fragmented authorial psyche, one segment of which is capable of the selection and ordering of images. Nor do I mean to imply that these new forms and voices have given rise to new truths offering security with which to replace those that anchored pre-twentieth-century Western peoples. On the contrary, the effect has been to confirm the fragmentation of self and society, rather

than to offer a solid framework to which to cling in the storm. Indeed, as Greenberg states, this variety at times results “in all ‘truths’ being reduced simply to change — to ideas of transition and metamorphosis that override a quest for substantive answers” (205). In fact, artistic movements may even revel in discontinuity, as this symptom of the condition of modern life opens and legitimizes so many creative possibilities<sup>15</sup>.

But literary expression of the twentieth-century condition is not limited to textual prose experiments or language play. Many twentieth-century authors still choose to portray the fragmented selves of the modern world via the traditional form of the novel. They divide their work into chapters, maintain a fairly chronological narrative, employ standard first- or third-person narration, make use of quotation marks to set off speech and adhere to accepted standards of grammar and punctuation. Both of Greenberg’s forms of fragmentation, as well as those described by Lifton and Morgan, are capable of being expressed either by traditional or more recent, experimental literary forms. The more traditional framework is the one within which Gerlind Reinshagen usually operates, and the one also often (but not always) employed by Luisa Josefina Hernández.

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<sup>1</sup> This sense of fragmentation, of disunity, is not limited to the self. Fragmentation is also a social disease, not restricted to the individual psyche alone. As Susan Read Baker, associate professor of French at the University of Florida points out in her article “Maxims, Moralists, and the Problematic of Discontinuity in Seventeenth-Century France,” “a true fragment ... would be a small piece broken off or violently separated from a whole” (38). As such, it is manifested by the aforementioned feelings of isolation and alienation, a sense or dread of having nothing in common with others, of being unintegrated into a social web. Connections between the self and other selves appear to be severed and irreparable. As member after member spins off into this void, any remains of a whole become difficult to identify.

<sup>2</sup> Greenberg’s gentle trepidation vis-a-vis democracy and quality finds much more direct expression in Arnold Wesker, who writes about “the correlation there seems to be between the development of democracy and the growing acceptance of mediocrity at all levels of that democratic life. I don’t believe it is *inherent* in the *nature* of democracy but in the way in which it has, till now, been handled. It seems as though the concept

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demanding everyman's [sic] voice to be heard has been accompanied by the notion that a high value must be placed on that which it is easy to comprehend" (108).

- <sup>3</sup> Charles Darwin published *The Origin of the Species* in 1859. Sigmund Freud published his first significant work, *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), in 1899.
- <sup>4</sup> Morgan, p. 202.
- <sup>5</sup> An introduction to the art of manipulating language so as to avoid the truth while simultaneously evading the lie can be found in Carey Quan Gelernter, "Here's the Truth (well, sort of)," *Seattle Times* 5 May 1998, E1, 2.
- <sup>6</sup> The term "protean" refers to Greek mythology and the sea god, Proteus, who was able to change his shape at will.
- <sup>7</sup> One thinks of compulsive hand washing and the like.
- <sup>8</sup> The Law, in all its aspects.
- <sup>9</sup> Greenberg is also of this opinion, stating on page 15 of *Splintered Worlds* that he "can offer instances of literary works behaving ... as highly individualized expressions, of cultural realities and problems" and on page 206 that "[o]ur literature ... is the deepest mirror of our identity — past, present, and future."
- <sup>10</sup> Brown. See pages 5 and 118 in particular.
- <sup>11</sup> Friedrich Schlegel published a *Romanfragment* (fragment of a novel), *Lucinde*, in 1799 and Novalis published his famous *Romanfragment*, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, in 1802.
- <sup>12</sup> See, for example, the poems of Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) and the poem-fragment "Kubla Kahn" (1816) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
- <sup>13</sup> Among other examples of the aforementioned variations on literary prose, see Juan Rulfo, *Pedro Páramo* (1955); James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) and *Ulysses* (1922); Gertrude Stein, "Melanctha" (1909) and *The Making of Americans* (1906-11); Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).
- <sup>14</sup> Julio Cortázar produced a novel, *Rayuela* (1963), which could be read either from beginning to end in the usual manner, or via a specified chapter plan in which certain chapters were leapfrogged over and returned to later. The text of Guillermo Cabrera Infante's 1967 novel, *Tres tristes tigres*, is primarily wordplay. Luisa Josefina Hernández leaps backwards and forwards in time, chapter by chapter, in her novel *Nostalgia de Troya* (1970), although she does end it at the latest date represented.
- <sup>15</sup> See David W. Seaman, p. 159.

CHAPTER 2: WHOLENESS BY THE NUMBERS  
(A GIFT? A CONDITION? A JOURNEY? A DREAM?)

What is wholeness? To seek an answer to that question is, in a certain sense, to plunge with open eyes into a murky sea of meanings, as wholeness, like any other concept addressed by philosophers and writers in this century, cannot be pinpointed by a single, precise understanding shared by a majority. Thus, in pursuing the notion, at least initially, one might conclude it futile even to believe in the possibility of a state of being that could stand in opposition to the sense of fragmentation in which is rooted much modern emptiness, fear and confusion. What is wholeness? Is there such a condition? Can wholeness be described broadly as a state of being? Can it be attained or must it be received? Or is the entire idea merely the dream of generation after unsatisfied generation, and the writers among them who sustain that dream, as the nostalgia of yet future generations?

There is no shortage of authorss who purport to have some knowledge of wholeness and who seek to communicate their knowledge via their books and articles. The prophets of wholeness span disciplines both within and outside of academic institutions. They include recognized authority figures in the world of ideas (i.e. C.G. Jung) and religion (i.e. J. Krishnamurti, Dr. James Dobson) as well as persons of lesser renown. An examination of a several perspectives on the subject may lead to some conclusions regarding the concept. Both of the scholars I have chosen relate wholeness with narrative, which is the arena in which concrete application of their conceptions will be sought. They also associate this desired state with a number, as does Luisa Josefina Hernández.

### Carl G. Vaught: A Trinitary View of Wholeness

Carl G. Vaught offers a philosophical perspective on wholeness and the process of attaining that state, within a literary context. “[T]he wholeness we seek, and the process of development we must undergo in order to achieve it, are not abstractions,” he maintains (ix). Therefore, pure philosophical reflection is inadequate for dealing with what Vaught (among others) calls “the human predicament.” In the Introduction to his book, he specifies that the artist and the theologian, as well as the philosopher, must all concern themselves with this question and others related to it. Consequently, employing both story-telling (in the form of English-language novels, Biblical stories and Greek myths) and reflective discourse springing from various works of Plato and Hegel, Vaught combines artistic, philosophical and religious elements in his prose journey toward wholeness. Artistic reference is made to one of the great novels of the English language, Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. The religious element is present in both Old Testament stories and Greek mythology. Philosophical correlation is drawn from one of Plato’s early dialogues, *Euthyphro*, and a number of works by G.W.F. Hegel.

Vaught refers to these sources as “concrete media of expression” and explains that the quest for wholeness cannot be pursued through abstract reflection alone, if it is to come to life within the individual. Rather, these expressive frameworks serve to maintain the depth and richness of the search, while enabling the seeker to understand the phenomena to which s/he has access through these media. “Though abstract reflection might permit us to grasp the generic structure of human existence, it is not sufficiently rich to encompass the quest for wholeness as it unfolds within direct experience” (x). Is experience, therefore, a fourth element in an approach that already includes “the telling of stories, the articulation of abstract distinctions, and the building of a philosophical system” (xiv) which, when combined together, Vaught terms “concrete reflection?” The answer is yes, when seen from

the perspective of one's own personal life experiences. But when, as Vaught emphasizes, it is story-telling that is employed to give one access to the potential "richness of experience" (xi) across ages and cultures, then the answer is no. Experience, other than in its most narrow interpretation, is an outgrowth of narrative. Therefore, concrete reflection is, generally, composed of three elements, and is part of Vaught's unarticulated message that three is the number of wholeness.

For Vaught, "the quest for wholeness begins with childhood and with the power of imagination to which almost every child responds" (xi). By this, he means that the child, through the reading of stories, is first inspired or filled with the desire to seek something other, better, than what s/he, and that in this way, the beginning of the search for wholeness often begins in childhood. Vaught does not pretend that the child is aware of the greater design of his or her thoughts as they occur. The *conscious* quest for wholeness, he asserts, begins later, from the point at which the adult recognizes fragmentation as the essence of the human predicament.

Essentially, Carl Vaught maintains that wholeness is only recognized, and is certainly defined, only in contrast to fragmentation. These very real conditions of fracturing, discontinuity and alienation, so different from those to which one aspires, and the given from which one begins, might lead one to question whether or not wholeness is merely an imagined state. Vaught, however, firmly asserts the veracity of the condition and its theoretical achievability, at least for limited periods of time.

Very little ink is spent on describing the discord between the individual and his/her environment before turning to the inner being.

[I]n its most serious existential forms, fragmentation does not appear as a negative relationship between ourselves and what stands in contrast with us, but as an internal modification of our own nature. We are alienated from the center

of human existence, and we often split apart into two competing wills, one of which affirms the meaning of human life, while the other turns away from a positive relationship with the ground of our existence. At times, the human soul even splinters into fragments, and its warring members seem to be engaged in a battle to the death. When this occurs, fragmentation becomes the central phenomenon of human existence. (1)

One notes that, for Vaught, psychic fragmentation may take one of two forms. Either the interior being divides into opposing, if not opposite, forces, or the self shatters into pieces, each one of which seems to contradict all of the others. In both cases, however, the picture is one of a former whole in need of a key or a process that would bring the warring elements back to a place from which they could once again function as a unit.

In presenting an example of a divided soul, Vaught contributes to the long tradition of illustrating the duality within as being at the root of the human condition. Two of the better known literary expressions of this understanding are found in Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll* and the lament of Goethe's *Faust* who cries, "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in einer Brust"<sup>1</sup> (34). This split being is representative of a seemingly endless series of opposites (life/death, good/evil, light/dark etc.) which potentially require reconciliation in order to avoid dissolution via either paralysis or self-destruction.

Where fragmentation, rather than division, is the case, the implication is that these segments are all part of a past and possible whole, rather than being like the pieces of several jigsaw puzzles mixed together within the box or frame to which some, but not all, rightly belong. Vaught's description of internal disharmony does, however, leave room for the possibility that scrambling of this type may be what the individual either perceives or feels to be the condition of his/her internal state.

“[T]he most basic human problems are not to be found in the relationship between ourselves and what lies beyond us, but within the human soul itself” (2) and “our most serious problem is to find a place to stand that overcomes the fragmentation of our own existence and brings wholeness to the human soul” (2), Vaught writes, stressing the internal, individual nature of the struggle and the serious difficulty of identifying a point of departure or at least a momentarily firm base from which to begin. The problem boils down to one of resolution of competing forces within the inner being. The quest for wholeness is an internal journey.

Vaught then modifies this position of pure internality by stating that, “the fragmentation of our nature is a reflection of the objective ambiguities with which we are confronted” (2) and that “[t]he fragmentation we experience is often caused by separation from others” (3). The use of the adjective “objective” to modify “ambiguities” suggests external as well as internal sources, and separation from others may be physical, emotional or perceptual. One may rarely be in the physical presence of others, yet still spend time in interaction via the telephone or, at a more remote level, the internet. One may also often be physically surrounded by others, yet fail to interact with them. This opens Vaught’s definition of the condition of psychic fragmentation to a battleground that includes some external causes and which may therefore necessitate inclusion of an external component in the “positive quest for fulfillment” that he prescribes as being “an adequate response to the human predicament” (3). His position is not prescriptive in that it does not dictate a firm and fixed pattern to follow, nor exclusive in that he does not rule out other, perhaps better responses.

Not surprisingly, he identifies it as common for individuals to struggle to overcome fragmentation by seeking significance for their lives in a larger community in. Vaught confirms this direction as correct, asserting that, “[w]holeness can never be found apart

from the community, for the meaning of human existence is partly constituted by the human bonds that tie us together” (3). A few sentences later, he reasserts that, “fulfillment ... can never be found in isolation” (3). Note that Vaught equates the condition of wholeness with fulfillment. What he means when he employs this term should become clear as his conception of the quest for wholeness is outlined.

Immediately after stressing the necessity of community, Vaught cautions against making it the sole solution to discontinuity and alienation:

[T]he individual must not lose himself [sic] in the larger world, for to do so would be to lose the center of the fragmented self, and to abandon the hope that wholeness can be found in a fashion uniquely appropriate to oneself. If wholeness is to be accessible, it must be relevant to our particular condition, not only allowing us to be a part of something larger, but also permitting us to be ourselves as unique individuals. The quest for wholeness involves a delicate interplay between the individuality we express and the communities in which we participate, and it is the harmonious interconnection between individuation and participation that those who undertake it must attempt to achieve. (3)

Thus, community is an element of wholeness, not the condition itself nor necessarily its most important ingredient.<sup>2</sup> Community must balance individuality, which would be congruent to the idea that the opposites in the divided soul must find an equilibrium rather than union or integration. Vaught, however, proceeds to inject a third element into the formula — the eternal.

“[I]n the final analysis,” he writes, “the quest also requires that we move beyond the finite order and that we stand face to face with what is ultimate and unconditioned. ... [T]he quest for wholeness is a quest for salvation; but what can salvation mean apart from a source of power and meaning that can sustain our existence?” (3). This must be so

because, as Vaught phrases it, “the ground of our existence transcends the human community” (3), in that it surpasses the particularity of the individual, whether singular or corporate.

This is the second instance in which it may be inferred from the text, without being overtly stated, that for Carl Vaught, the number of wholeness is three. The three essential components of his “fulfillment” being the individual, the community and the divine, which comprise what he terms “a three-dimensional space in which human beings can live” (4). This is entirely compatible with the Christian emphasis on the Holy Trinity and with Hegel’s tri-partite philosophy, which, he points out himself, are “mutual reflections of one another” (168). But whether Vaught’s construction resulted from his exploration of the Bible and Hegel’s philosophy, or whether he uses Hegel and Bible stories because of their association with a trinity, is never stated.

Vaught cautions against the idea that the quest for wholeness moves along a linear plane, transforming the fragmentation of the past and present into the wholeness of the eternal future. Rather — and this is essential to his theory — this journey moves in two directions, both of which begin in the present. “The quest for wholeness,” he states, “moves forward toward a larger, more inclusive unity, but it also leads us back to the origins of our individual existence. In doing so, it attempts to overcome fragmentation by allowing us to stand at the midpoint between an unbounded future and a determinate past that has left its individuating mark upon us” (4). One can approach wholeness either by moving out into the world, i.e. forward into the future, into community and an awareness of the eternal, or by returning to one’s origins, to the community of the family and the mystery of creation.

In fact, the family may figure in both scenarios, as movement forward may also include beginning a new family of one’s own after having left the family to go out into the

world. The questor, however, may not be aware of the directionality of the quest, as the distinction is not made at the experiential level, but rather, on the level of reflection. Thus, the individual may be engaged in this quest without being conscious either of the direction in which it is leading her or him, or of its overall bi-directional nature. In some cases, Vaught explains, the only route possible is into the future, either because there is no family of origin to return to, because this particular family is weak or ineffectual, or because of cruelty or abuse in the family that is too threatening to face.

At other times, the only route taken by a particular individual may be the one that leads back to origins. Biblical stories often play a part in this journey for two reasons: 1) they “move us backward into a mysterious and originative past and make it possible for us to confront a real ground with which we stand in irreducible contrast” and 2) “the Biblical context brings us face to face with God as the sustaining ground of human existence. In doing so, it points to the radical otherness of God, to the need to stand before him as an irreducible individual, and to the quest for wholeness as a quest for individuation” (11).

It is also possible, he points out, that the quest for wholeness may require travel in both temporal directions by a single individual. Because turning away from one’s origins may, in some cases, cause one to sacrifice uniqueness and thereby lose identity, to lose touch with who one is through forfeiting particularity, it may be critical at some point to reverse direction and return to one’s origins, looking away from the future and back toward the past. The purpose of doing so is not to lose oneself there, but to contrast oneself with them as part of a positive process. To fully enmesh ourselves in the particular habits and traditions of our family of origin would be to separate ourselves from others, whose customs and habits are different than ours. One is led back to his/her origins to confront them, not to become immersed or mired in them.

Vaught also cautions against what he calls “two kinds of degeneration” (7) of the quest for wholeness. The first mistaken route a seeker may easily traverse is that of pure action apart from reflection, rejecting words and thought as removed from experience. “Since the quest occurs in the real world, and since speech about it places us at a reflective distance from direct experience, it is tempting to conclude that discourse of the kind we are attempting can only be a pale reflection of the thing itself” (7). This, of course, directly contradicts the concrete media of expression that Vaught laid out at the beginning of the text and stressed as essential to the quest. Nevertheless, the temptation is there to exempt the reflective element, the word, or logos, which would, given that three of the four essential elements (or all three elements, depending upon one’s point of view) are tied to the word, shrink the means of discovery and understanding to something too narrow to permit an encounter with wholeness. Pure action is also too closely tied to the present to permit the necessary temporal movement required if one is to approach fulfillment. Finally, experience alone, without the word, is limited to one’s own self as well as one’s own time.

The second common error, or degeneration, of the quest is to mistake complete comprehension for wholeness and to make understanding the goal of one’s search. “From this second perspective,” writes Vaught, “fragmentation is identified with the finitude of partial understanding, and human wholeness is equated with the capacity to give a comprehensive account of the world as a whole and of the place of the human soul within it” (8). But finitude must not be confused with fragmentation, he cautions, despite the fact that all that is human is finite, including human wholeness, which, likewise, must not be confused with understanding. Recognition of the infinite is a component of wholeness, and there can be no contact with the eternal apart from an element of mystery. In the face of the mystery and power of the divine, the human being must search for an “intelligible structure of an objective standard for human action” (125), not complete comprehension.

Later in this volume, Vaught mentions a third, less common form of degeneration that is often observed, namely, that of mistaking the quest for wholeness as a search for objective structure, a goal common to fundamentalist movements. Because any form of structure brings at least a feeling of stability to the human being, the temptation to turn aside and follow this path is understandable. But even were truly objective structure achievable, it is a dead end where wholeness is concerned.

The quest for wholeness begins from the point of the fragmented human condition, recognized or unrecognized. The first steps are undertaken via the reading of stories or the hearing of stories. (The telling of stories begins at a later point.) Alternatively, the journey may commence with a direct encounter with God. In either case, Vaught emphasizes:

it is also important to notice that the quest can begin anywhere; that it must begin somewhere in particular; and that it always begins nowhere. ... [T]he quest is a temporal process that is universal because it can begin with anyone; particular because it must begin with the one who actually undertakes it; and ultimate because it always makes reference to a point beyond the temporal dimension (23).

What he points out in this passage is the tri-fold nature of wholeness; that the search itself has a communal dimension (in that any or every person can undertake it), an individual dimension (in that it must begin each time from a particular self); and a divine dimension (that offers access to eternity). “Fragmentation,” he states, “is related to a plurality of positive dimensions” (24), but as his understanding of it is revealed, it is seen not to be an unlimited plurality, but rather, plural in the sense of being greater than two.

Opposition is also a part of this process that can begin with anyone. The three forms of degeneration discussed and the human being’s tendency to be easily sidetracked into one or more of them are a form of opposition. There also exists what he terms “natural

opposition,”<sup>3</sup> or resistance to change, both within the individual and as a reaction of the community in which s/he exists. Thirdly, he names “radical opposition”<sup>4</sup> as a factor, citing punishment (deserved or undeserved) as an example.

In this context of a triadic, experiential structure (group-individual-divine) and a three-dimensional time component (past-future-trans-temporal), what exactly does Vaught mean when he equates wholeness with fulfillment? If, indeed, for him, the number of wholeness is three, there can be no balance between pairs of opposites as there might be in a fractured version of the concept of “dual nature.” Rather, fulfillment is the state of being that results when there is harmony between the elements of the various triads: individual-communal-divine; particular-universal-ultimate; past-present-future (eternal); mystery-power-structure; art-religion-philosophy; abstract reflection-story-telling-experience. Vaught sometimes refers to the “unity” rather than the “harmony” between elements when discussing fulfillment. He speaks of this unity in the same vein as that in which he discusses community, that is, not in the sense of sameness, but rather, in the sense of a unifying tie between the elements. “Unity” is thus understood also as “unit-y” in which singular and corporate natures are emphasized simultaneously, in which the “unit-ness” of the members is very much present in the group. In this respect, this “unity” is not incompatible with “harmony” in his depiction of wholeness.

Harmony alone is not Vaught’s sole goal, nor is his idea of “fulfilment” entirely defined by it. The other component is one he terms “finite self-acceptance.”<sup>5</sup> In using “finite” as a modifying adjective, he stresses both the individual and eternal dimensions of the environment in which the self is placed. The communal element is added when finite self-acceptance is coupled with harmony. The necessary or inevitable opposition may be either internal or external, and is equally formidable in either case. Although the quest is an

individual undertaking, Vaught views integration of outside relationships as integral to both the process and the desired end state.

#### Walter Thiessen: A Christian Approach to Wholeness

Vaught's conception of wholeness is similar to that of Mennonite seminarian Walter Thiessen. The former, however, develops the idea across a much broader field, incorporating, as he does, art, religion and philosophy. Thiessen approaches the question, unsurprisingly, from a purely religious framework. His conclusions are remarkably similar to those of Carl Vaught, while his exploration of the interrelationship of the essential components of individuality, community and the divine is much more expansive.

From Thiessen's point of view, in contrast to that of both Hannah and Vaught, the longing for wholeness begins with the communal. In the Abstract, he identifies interpersonal security — rather than internal security in the form of finite self-acceptance — as “the primary motivation of human behavior” (36). He later defines this term as “a combination of acceptance, being responded to, and liberation” (36) out of which emerges meaning, identity and purpose. Thiessen insists that both community and individuality are fundamental givens, and bases this statement on research in early childhood development, and social science studies of adult attachment needs and their connection to maturation and healthy emotional growth.

Where Thiessen maintains we haven't the power to do away with either individuality or community, George W. Morgan might say we've already done away with both. But Thiessen's focus is on wholeness, while Morgan concerns himself primarily with the dislocations of the human predicament. He admits that within the framework of twentieth-century Western culture, it is easier to focus on one or the other, but stresses that to do so is to position oneself outside of wholeness. Entering into community seems to

require a loss of individuality, a sort of psychic amputation. To remain apart from others results in emotional withering. One must not mistakenly assume that “community” is singular. Thiessen agrees with the views of those who paint a picture of the modern age as an embodiment of the plural. “Each person,” he points out, “is not only a member of one community but of many” (6). He lists some of them: “[F]amily, church, neighborhood, relationship with God, humanity, creation” (6); as well as, “neighborhoods, cities, and nations; churches, fraternal organizations, and ethnic groups; workplaces, guilds, and economies; friendships, cliques and networks” (65). This list, although incomplete, is helpful in that it points out the range in size and degree that may exist in what we view as our communities. We are a part of a small group called “family,” which may number only two persons, perhaps a couple or a parent and child. We are also, as separate beings, each part of the entire natural world and the cosmos, and what we do to our environment has an effect on our health, and therefore our lives. Community, Thiessen specifies, is

any relationship or system of relationships that has a somewhat distinct identity and/or boundary and relative temporal stability. This stability implies that there is, acknowledged or unacknowledged, at least a minimal sense of commitment to the community. Therefore, a marriage is a community of two; the universal church is a community of many, across the globe and across millennia. A conversation between seatmates on a bus, on the other hand, is not a community because there is no temporal stability, though it may, of course, be a relationship that is part of a larger community such as a neighborhood. (8)

Given this multitude of communities, it is not surprising that Thiessen cautions, “Between each of these communities, there will be tensions. The tension between an individual and a single community is only part of a complex dynamic system of tensions between all the various communities of a person’s life” (6).

Unlike Vaught, the theologian explicitly states that the journey to wholeness is one of a three-fold movement and that the necessary components of wholeness number three. He also purposely enumerates the Christian trinity in his discussion of the divine element of wholeness. The three components essential for wholeness are the individual, the community and the divine, precisely the three singled out by Carl Vaught as one of his series of triadic formations.

From Thiessen's point of view, wholeness is also reached via a journey, and this journey has three stages — liberation, wilderness, covenant — that cannot be short-changed without the result being fragmentation. This quest, similar to that described by Vaught, requires a combination of reason and reflection, a “narrative ideal” made coherent “through the hearing and reading of stories” (60) and actual experience, because, he stresses, “we need experience as well as ideas” (54). This combination of elements, once again, forms a triad. The narrative ideal must embody movement and is represented here by Biblical stories and Native American lore. Specifically, Thiessen illustrates his theories using the Old Testament account of the life of Moses and a fused version of several accounts of the vision quest, a Native American coming-of-age ritual for males, while leaving an opening for the employment of stories other than these.

The movement of which this narrative is composed “is sometimes toward liberation and other times toward commitment, sometimes toward others and sometimes away” (6) and “can easily be confusing and fragmenting if we do not combine it with the ... suggestion of God as a unifying and integrating center” (7). In fact, as Thiessen understands the quest, “it is God who calls us out of bondage, who meets us and reveals himself to us in the wilderness, and who forms a new people united by a shared covenant with God” (7). Despite this heavy emphasis on the religious component, he takes pains to point out that he does not mean to suggest that committed Christians alone are moving

towards wholeness, but that “God is active in the lives of those who are not yet aware of it, and the sad truth is that many Christians are moving very slowly in spite of the dynamic Spirit within them” (7-8).

When we begin a search for wholeness, we disengage ourselves from one or more of our present communities. Ideally, at least one of these communities has provided us with “a symbol system in which an encounter with God makes sense” (26) so that our time in the wilderness will be fruitful. Thiessen maintains that we go to the wilderness in order to fill an empty space inside us which is the place to which we look for, but do not find, complete satisfaction of our security needs as well as for purpose. This cavity he calls our “Godspace,” that need in our lives that can be filled only by the divine. But if the communities from which we separate ourselves have lacked a coherent system of symbols and narrative that would pave the way for the possibility of contact with God, this sojourn in the wilderness may be premature. Rather than returning from the wilderness a new, or changed person, able to enter into a covenant community, we may need to return to society, enter different communities, and repeat the process. This three-fold movement itself may be experienced in three different ways. One way is to separate from one community and join another, following one’s wilderness encounter with God. Another is to separate, be changed, and return to the old community in a new way. A third possibility is to make the journey together with a community. The Old Testament story of Moses is an example of both the second and third possibilities. The Native American vision quest is an example of the third. Thiessen does not provide an illustration of the first possibility. But when the process has been completed, we may again be called to the wilderness for renewal, repeating the three-step process periodically throughout our lives.

Having encountered “the integrating center” (as Thiessen sometimes refers to God) in the wilderness, the third stage of the journey is a return to community (actually, to

communities) as a changed person. This is because commitment to God calls and leads one to commitment to others and because “God meets our needs for security and purpose primarily through others” (47). Security, vocation and truth (another triad), in fact, are all discovered within the context of community in light of the presence of the divine.

If one enters the wilderness without the necessary narrative or system of symbols, Thiessen asserts, multiplicity may result. “Not finding any integrating center, the parts of the self need to split off, attaching themselves to various internalized objects, which are themselves caricatured in partial ways” (40) This is what often happens in the modern, Western world, he claims, where individuals and families end up essentially stranded in the wilderness. Unlike Vaught, Thiessen does not explicitly root the motivation for the search for wholeness in fragmentation, although he strongly implies that multiplicity is what drives one to the quest. He is also the only one of the three to distinguish between them: “Multiple selves, which inevitably result from a variety of roles and experiences in different contexts may be integrated, but fragmented selves are not” (40). Further, “fragmentation is either denial of any integrating attachment, or it is polytheistic, attaching to many different gods or idols. In either case, fragmentation means that people form several attachments that do not integrate their life but pull them apart” (82). The fragmented individual lacks the necessary provisions for movement.

It is unclear whether or not he believes fragmented selves may ever become integrated or how one would move from fragmentation to multiplicity to integration if it is possible. Like Vaught, he addresses the classic dichotomy within, stating, “The most typical and profound split is between the “good” parts of the self and the “bad” parts” (40) and refers to the psychological theories of Carl Jung as one example of an attempt to understand how to integrate these good and bad aspects of the self. It is unclear whether he believes this type of an attempt may be successful.

The natural desire for security also poses a danger to wholeness, in that, as Thiessen puts it, “security often prefers a familiar pain” (59) to the unfamiliarity of more positive conditions, and the changed being may close up in what s/he views as a protective posture and retreat to former communities, even where doing so is harmful to the person. This is related to another mistaken response to the desire for security, namely, rigidity and the formation of closed communities “with rigid boundaries, protecting themselves against new members and new ideas. If new members are admitted they must quickly conform to the structure or be spit out. While there is a great deal of security in such a system, it is a false security” (43) because it is based on denial. Such a community denies both truth and the individual. Fundamentalism, both religious and political, is an example of a closed community.

Of course, Thiessen points out, a community that is too open poses a threat to security. Experienced as chaotic, unstable and unsafe, such groupings are lacking in the stability he maintains is essential to the definition of community. As an example of this overly open community, he offers the type of social grouping that appears survives in a fragmented society, an assemblage which he refers to as a “lifestyle enclave” (84). These are circles of friends who share the same lifestyle, and Thiessen argues that this is something less than a true community because they “involve only a segment of each individual, for they concern only private life, especially leisure and consumption” (83-84).

Once again, one observes that for Thiessen, the number of wholeness is three, when he divides security into three aspects: acceptance, responsiveness and liberation<sup>6</sup>. Interpersonal security goes beyond acceptance. It requires response and freedom. It must allow the individual to differentiate him- or herself from the community, while remaining committed to it. Thiessen maintains that this is possible only where the individuals involved “integrate their lives around a center that is both transcendent to the community

and incarnated within it and themselves” (Abstract). The only such center, he believes, that is “large enough to accept the good and the bad, freedom and limitations, security and purpose” is “an infinite God willing to be incarnated in a concrete world” (45).

It is also in this context that Thiessen’s second element of community — truth — is to be found. In this context, he speaks of “the existence of an absolute reality that our constructions are related to” (11-12), in which he personally believes. This belief affords him the view that “some constructions are truer than others not only because they are more useful, but because they are more reflective of absolute reality” (12).

Finally, there is vocation, or purpose, which “is not imposed but found in dialogue with God and one’s community” (62). Thiessen lists three ways in which community is the context of vocation: “A community helps a person discern his [sic] calling from God both by its symbol system and by the naming and encouraging of gifts. Secondly, the community has a corporate vocation with which the member identifies. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, a community offers the needs of its members” (63). But a healthy community, while offering its members security, vocation and truth, will not require their sole loyalty or total conformity.

Growth occurs in part via the acquisition of knowledge from outside the present boundaries, which is why Thiessen describes truthresiding outside the boundaries of a community as a stranger, and why he maintains that it is often met with, literally, through strangers to the community. Thus, such an organization of individuals must also be hospitable, and capable of dealing with tension from beyond its borders. Despite this quality, it must also be stable, while remaining flexible. In today’s world, the greatest threat to stability is mobility. Rituals and traditions, a narrative and a symbol system, serve to stabilize a community over time in an era where there is little permanence of place. These rituals “must make sense of the present context” (77) while rooting the community in

the past and tying it to the future. Security and stability are both aided in a setting in which identity runs deeper than one's own lifetime. In addition, he maintains, traditions and narrative "provide a structure that limits the number of choices in our life. An unstructured life with no rituals would be an intolerably endless series of decisions" (77). Thiessen stresses that stable communities serve to cut the choices we must make down to a manageable level, but do not eliminate them.

He also cautions communities never to believe that any one has a monopoly on God. "God is present in every community," Thiessen argues (85), yet, "The God of every community is still distorted" (86). He stresses that no single community "can accurately or fully embody God alone" and therefore one must be "ever free to receive grace again through attachment to other communities" (86). Multiple membership is desirable for growth and health, but membership should be to genuine communities, not to the "anemic" enclaves formed by the fragmented, in which greater freedom may seem to reign, but which freedom is as without meaning as it is without purpose.

So what exactly is wholeness from Thiessen's perspective? Wholeness "is the development of an integrating center in one's life" (41) he states. This center is based on vocation, security and truth, and can only fully be found in God. It is neither abstracted rational freedom, nor abstracted emotional freedom, but an integrated relationship around a center. Relative wholeness is possible where security, vocation and truth are experienced in the absence of a relationship with God. This does not resemble Vaught's harmony within triads, despite both of these men's association of the number three with wholeness. Where Vaught and Thiessen do agree is that wholeness and fulfillment are related, and that to reach them requires growth in communal, individual and spiritual contexts. When Thiessen refers to "the integrating person" as the one who has achieved some measure of wholeness, he calls to mind Robert Jay Lifton's "protean self," the individual who is

unthreatened by plurality, within and without, one who has the capacity to “sustain and live out moral principles in the midst of psychological flux.”<sup>7</sup> The difference between them is Thiessen’s insistence on the central role of the divine, which he calls “the integrating center,” that which Vaught sometimes refers to as “the sustaining ground of human existence.”

### Conclusion

Both of these scholars concur that wholeness must be approached by a journey undertaken with the sense of a quest, in which wholeness is the sought-after reward at the journey’s end, the goal of the search. There is also agreement between them that storytelling, or the narrative, has a role to play in this search that is essential to the psychic journey. There is also agreement between them as to the combined internal/external nature of the journey, and both agree that there are three necessary components involved: the individual, the community and the transcendent. For Vaught, the starting point of the journey is the condition of fragmentation, which he equates with plurality, multiplicity and splintering. For Thiessen, the point of departure is multiplicity, which he differentiates from fragmentation. In neither of the theories examined is this movement linear. Vaught allows as the search may lead one toward the past in the form of a return to origins, toward the future and toward eternity, that is, forward, backward and upward, while Thiessen speculates on an upward direction that may lead either forward or backward (in the sense of a return) but which is always marked by growth.

Carl Vaught is alone in his belief that wholeness may sometimes be offered as a gift of God, as something undeserved that “must simply be received” (xi). He is also alone in his belief that fulfillment is an assuredly reachable state of being in human experience. For Thiessen, wholeness is approachable for all, but most will experience an imperfect or

relative form of it. This is not to rule out that some few may indeed reach this goal during their lifetimes, although only in short, transient bursts. Wholeness must be attainable, even briefly, or it is no more than a dream, or whatever the human being postulates as the opposite of his/her present condition. If unrealizable, wholeness might be but an imaginary security that people of the present day read into the narratives of the past.

It is my contention that wholeness, whether it exists in an experiential level or only at a conceptual level, is not the opposite of fragmentation, but rather, stands in opposition to it. I find support for this position in Vaught's assertion that wholeness is but one response to the problem of fragmentation. Furthermore, by postulating a second condition by which to oppose twentieth-century disintegration, one removes the last, lingering element of dualistic thought.

The significance of the number three as reflective of wholeness is directly related, in both cases, to a specifically Christian world view. Because Christianity is historically the dominant religion of the Western world, Christian thought, which has been influential in the arts for many centuries, can be expected to retain at least some of its power today, although one must not assume it does so in the same way, nor that all artists are, consciously or unconsciously, under traceable influence. Apart from this tradition, to view wholeness as triple may be a fit response to the plurality of the modern world while making the attempt to limit the seemingly infinite number of possible selves. Hernández, as will be shown, attaches a much different number to her concept of wholeness, and Reinshagen does not relate the idea to numbers at all. Consideration of their literary works will require an examination of form, as well as content, which may reveal further evidence of either psychic disconnection or unity or both.

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- <sup>1</sup> “Two souls, alas, are dwelling in my breast.” pg. 27, line 1112. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. Faust. Trans. Walter Arndt. Ed. Cyrus Hamlin. New York: Norton, 1976.
- <sup>2</sup> Later (pages 59-60), Vaught will stress that this community must be a *community of individuals*; a unity defined by difference or particularity, rather than by sameness, and all of them as a group identified by their individual relationships with the divine.
- <sup>3</sup> Vaught 47.
- <sup>4</sup> Vaught 28.
- <sup>5</sup> Vaught 40.
- <sup>6</sup> Thiessen 55.
- <sup>7</sup> Lifton 6.

### CHAPTER 3: THE LIMITS OF WHOLENESS IN THE FRAGMENTED WORLD OF GERLIND REINSHAGEN

Gerlind Reinshagen was born in 1926 in Königsberg, Ostpreußen<sup>1</sup>, and has lived in Berlin for many years. She has, to date, published four novels and one book of short stories (*Zwölf Nächte* <sup>2</sup>[1989]). Her work is characterized by fragmented narrative form. For example, although her second novel, *Die flüchtige Braut* <sup>3</sup> (1984), begins each chapter with both a number and a title, and employs the chronological form of plotting, narration here is neither straight-forward, nor traditional. Point of view passes between four of the eleven characters, varying with the change in chapters, and allowing the action to be seen from various perspectives, while the narrative voice shifts between first person (Dora's letters, ten chapters) and third-person authorial (the remaining eighteen chapters). Dora's letters to Ludwig make up ten of the twenty-eight chapters, the thoughts and actions of Hans Straup compose a further nine, those of the journalist, Robert, seven more, and the final chapter is given over to Ludwig's point of view. Jutta Kiencke-Wagner refers to this form of narrative as "prismatische."<sup>4</sup> Although the perspective changes, narrative voice remains constant between the men. The fact that only Dora's outlook is narrated in the first person lends her voice additional force.

In Reinshagen's two most recent novels, *Jäger am Rand der Nacht* <sup>5</sup> (1993) and *Am großen Stern* <sup>6</sup> (1996), she continues to follow a traditional, chronological method of plotting, and to divide her work into chapters. In the former, each of these chapters begins with a title and an unattributed quote (the authors of these quotes are revealed in the table of contents at the end), while in the latter they are simply numbered. In *Jäger*, however, where the narrator is concerned, the author has gone one step further in the direction she

followed in *Die flüchtige Braut*. Like *Braut*, which employed four distinct perspectives and two narrators, bounded by chapter, who reappeared at regular intervals throughout the novel, *Jäger* also engages the chapter as a form of narrative boundary. In this case, the story of the mental or psychic disintegration of the protagonist, Gregor, is told in eight chapters encompassing six different viewpoints, none of which is his own. These chapters are periodically interspersed by two- to three-page first person interludes entitled “Wer spricht?” (“Who is speaking?”) in which attention is explicitly directed — by both the content and the interlude’s title — to the question of narration.

Although both Barnabas, his dead father, and Manja, his great aunt who is dying, reappear in two chapters near the end, there is no special sense that their voices carry more weight than do the others’. This impression is communicated in part by the fact that theirs are not first person narratives, and in part by the greater total length given to other characters’ points of view. The Foreign Girl has the last word, one of the longer passages, and is the only character to narrate in the first person. Hers is the only chapter in which other characters’ speech appears in quotes. But she is never named, and therefore, in a sense, does not speak. She is known as The Foreign Girl to the other characters and so defined by them. All of the other chapters are written, not in a traditional third-person narration, but in the form of what Dorrit Cohn calls “narrated monologue,”<sup>7</sup> i.e. a character’s mental discourse in the guise of the narrator’s voice. It is one of the varieties of third-person narration that has been developed by twentieth-century authors in an effort to express internality and multiplicity.

This narrated monologue is interspersed with indented lines of stream of consciousness narration in the first person. In this way Reinshagen represents the individual fractured psyches within the micro-structure of the chapter form, while using the

macro form of the novel to portray the fragmented psyche of the protagonist, who may indeed be all six versions of himself (and more) that are offered to the reader.

*Am großen Stern: Fragmentation In Form And Content*

*Am großen Stern*, also avoids a traditional third-person narrative voice, that which Cohn terms “authorial narration,”<sup>8</sup> in favor of narrated monologue from the protagonist’s point of view. Strings of sentence fragments linked by colons and semi-colons share space on the page with run-on sentences assembled with similar punctuation. Fragments masquerade as sentences. Quotation marks are almost entirely absent and punctuation does not distinguish between thought and speech. Punctuation, in fact, appears to be almost random, as it serves train of thought rather than literary rules. Many sentences that lack a subject build on or off other sentences. This is disconcerting to the reader, as German is not a null-subject language. The use of apostrophes is random and does not follow established grammatical practice. They are seldom used when the final letter is left off a word<sup>9</sup> or when a word is contracted<sup>10</sup>. Apostrophes are, however, sometimes used to form contractions of two words<sup>11</sup>.

Where quoted speech is signaled, it is set off by dashes, a form also frequently employed by Luisa Josefina Hernández. This occurs only in the six chapters that are written entirely as dialogue, Chapters IV, VIII, XIV, XVI, XVIII and XXII. These dialogues could easily be confused with scripts for the stage, were it not for the absence of stage directions. As it is, they could be thought of as dialogue lifted from scripts, and several of them resemble blank verse, a form that has a long and honorable tradition in the dramatic arts as well as standing in its own right as poetry. Thus, Reinshagen questions the wholeness of the text in these six chapters by multiplying the form, producing a textual

identity conflict in which the dialogue may simultaneously be a chapter in a larger novel, a poem written in blank verse and a fragment of a larger work for the stage.

As in most of Reinshagen's novelistic work, there is a single protagonist, and in this aspect the author makes use of the traditional structure of the novel. But the protagonist is no hero — a modern touch — and like fully half of the main characters, unsympathetic. The story is told mainly in the present tense, even where the effect is jarring. Nothing is reported that Falk, the protagonist, doesn't himself do, see, hear, think, fear or imagine. Insofar as the seventeen narrative chapters are concerned, the reader receives Falk's perspective alone, although it is often rendered in the third person. That the narrator is only partially reliable, quickly becomes obvious, although he seems to dependably express his own perspective. Falk may not be entirely conscious of his own motivations, and indications of that which may lie in his subconscious are expressed in his attitudes and reactions to unfolding events. This sometimes takes the form of a single word bursting into his active thoughts, despite often being disconnected from either these very thoughts or the actions of the moment.

The narrative is liberally sprinkled with foreign words, mainly English, but French, Italian, Latin and Spanish words appear also. There are many references to contemporary and historical literary and cultural figures, from Albert Einstein to Julia Roberts. Germanized foreign words also appear at irregular intervals, and there is regular use of slang. In addition, the personal, casual tone of the narrative is intensified by frequent employment of colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions. Falk "kommt vom Hundertsten ins Tausendste"<sup>12</sup> (224). The characters "machen sie gute Miene zum bösen Spiel"<sup>13</sup> (160). Such language includes the occasional maxim or saying in the tradition of folk wisdom, and the heavy deployment of such expressions serves here to reflect confusion of thought that borders on lunacy. When Falk is least lucid, in Chapter XX, several

paragraphs of the narrative are nothing but strings of complete and partial sayings of this type. “Geduld ist bitter, aber die Frucht is süß! Man muß was man anfängt, zu Ende führen! Was du heute kannst besorgen ... Heute back ich, morgen brau ich ...”<sup>14</sup> (245) [ellipses the author’s].

The novel’s portrait of disharmony and disintegration, then, plays out in the form as well as the content. In this, it is very similar to *El lugar donde crece la hierba*, an early novel by Luisa Josefina Hernández. But fracturing the traditional form of the novel is a technique Reinshagen nearly always chooses, in contrast to the Mexican author, who varies voice and form from one text to the next.

The plot revolves around Falk, an unmarried man who, like all of the characters in *Am großen Stern*, is identified only by a single name, in this case, his first. Falk is a contract photographer, working out of his home in a remodeled apartment in the former East Berlin. He is nearing forty and has a string of ex-girlfriends and strained relationships. Visiting his friend Jörg and ex-girlfriend Matti, now romantically involved with each other, Falk is captivated by their eleven-year-old foster daughter, Bronja, and asks that her custody be transferred to him. With some reservations, they agree, and the girl goes home with Falk. The novel traces the next six years of their lives through Falk’s experiences of the time as it passes.

There are early indications that Falk may be a pedophile, foreshadowing his attempted rape of his foster daughter in Percy’s apartment. Following an unusual life with Falk, Bronja escapes her cage, her cell and her pedestal with Percy’s help. But Percy keeps her as a mistress and this enrages Falk, who breaks through years of self-restraint where the girl is concerned. The final chapter, in which Bronja, hemorrhaging after aborting Percy’s child and leaving the hospital prematurely, returns to the apartment she was raised in to engage voluntarily in sex with her foster father, is less clearly anticipated.

That the novel ends with her death, however, is not surprising, given the pervasive *leitmotif* of death and dying.

It is a bleak world one enters. Immediate post-Cold War East Berlin is in a state of decomposition. Everything around Falk is rotting: The apples at the fruit stand, the buildings that have either not been maintained or not been rebuilt after WWII, the Spree River that flows through his neighborhood, the food he should have photographed sooner, what nature there is left on the edges of the city, his relationships. “Suchte man nach einem Symbol für den Zustand der Welt, hat Falk gedacht, man brauchte nur ein ungeschöntes Foto dieser Lebensmittel auszustellen, ein Bild des stinkenden, verdorbenen Überflusses”<sup>15</sup> (242).

Rot, decay, decomposition, disintegration and ruins are everywhere. There is a pile of rubble, trashed building materials, in the courtyard of the apartment house where Falk and Bronja live. Trash is heaped up in a corner of their apartment and piles of old newspapers are scattered in several places. Termites are a problem in the apartment. Dusty junk lies around in drawers and cupboards. The ruins of houses built before WWII dot the edges of the city and crumbling facades are not uncommon within. The verbs “zersetzen,” “verderben,” “vermodern” and “verrotten”<sup>16</sup> appear persistently to describe both people and things, as do the verbs “vergeuden,” “verschleudern,” “vernachlässigen” and “verwüsten.”<sup>17</sup> This decomposition and disintegration are due in part to waste within a wasteland, and the human waste that inhabits it.

If names are any indication, not one person in Falk’s world embodies wholeness. People he has known in his youth, such as his friends Jörg, Percy and Paul are presented with first names only (although Percy is often referred to as a type, “ein Percy”<sup>18</sup>), as is Matti, his ex-girlfriend; Karoline, his current girlfriend; children, whether Jörg’s from a previous marriage, his foster daughter or her friend; and Zita, the local lunatic. Neighbors

are known by some form of their last names. Slobodan lives above them. Frau Merz lives next door. Taufik, the doctor, lives downstairs.

Family is especially problematic. Falk divides his mother into two persons, the young “gypsy” mother of his infancy and childhood way back when, and the other one, the old, ugly mother of his adolescence, his present and his future. Although he divides his mother into two time periods, he is often conscious of their simultaneous existence. He generally refers to her as “die Mutter,”<sup>19</sup> and although this is a common practice in everyday German speech, Falk takes it to such an extent that the intent is obvious. Using this constant form of address, he dehumanizes his mother into a stock character. To express this duality, he alternately refers to either “die junge Kindermutter”<sup>20</sup> or one alternately known as “die Alte”<sup>21</sup> and “die schon häßliche.”<sup>22</sup> It is through Bronja that her first name comes to light: Herma.

Where Falk has divided his mother in two, it is the twists and turns of life that have provided him with two fathers. The one he refers to repeatedly as “der echte, der Malervater,”<sup>23</sup> is the biological, opium-smoking father, who one day left for the Pampas, leaving behind what he found inessential: His encyclopedia, a few pieces of furniture, an opium pipe, his lesser paintings, his wife and his infant son. The man who replaced him some years later is generally referred to as “der Orthopäde,”<sup>24</sup> that is, as another stock character in Falk’s private drama. Occasionally, he is also known as “der Stiefvater”<sup>25</sup> and “der fremde Vater,”<sup>26</sup> further figurative descriptions. Herma, however, refers to her present husband by her nickname for him, “Patschke” and this is duly reported by the protagonist. It is the only true nickname ever mentioned in Falk’s world.

The two mothers thus correspond to two fathers. The young, gypsy mother and the painter-father are a nostalgically imagined/remembered couple, cherished in the mind of their grown son. The old, ugly mother and the orthopedic surgeon form the other couple,

as hated by Falk as the other is treasured. Thus Falk, like his foster daughter, is essentially fatherless, and certainly views himself in this light. He is himself an adopted child, in that he understands his present mother not to be his “real” mother. Fatherlessness is identified by Robert Jay Lifton as one of the hallmarks of fragmentation. In the same way, Carl Vaught sites the experience of adoption by strangers as leading away from wholeness.

Bronja, his foster daughter, is repeatedly described as “das Kind,”<sup>27</sup> in the earlier chapters, which under the rules of German grammar permits her to be referred to by the pronoun “es,”<sup>28</sup> as a thing. As the story progresses, however, Falk increasingly refers to her not only by name, but also possessively as “sein Kind”<sup>29</sup> and “seine Tochter.”<sup>30</sup> This possessiveness is reserved exclusively for Bronja. Neither his young mother, his idealized, biological father nor his current girlfriend are ever so designated. And Bronja’s distant, legal relatives are further removed, further dehumanized by their sole description as types. Her mother’s sister-in-law is disparagingly referred to as “die kleine Dürre”<sup>31</sup> and the woman’s husband is dubbed “der Zimmerman.”<sup>32</sup>

This atmosphere of dehumanization is furthered by the pervasive use of animal motifs and metaphors in the text. In Falk’s eyes, his world is filled with the base instincts of creatures in the wild, rather than with civilized and rational human beings. There are over one hundred direct references to animals in the novel, reinforced through the application to humans of verbs and adjectives normally applied to beasts. Falk sees himself as a dog, a hunting dog, and Bronja — alternately a cat and a swan — as his prey. Percy, he views as a wolf, and Hertenstein as a hamster, while his mother is repeatedly compared with a toad. Everywhere he looks, Falk sees himself surrounded by wild animals: Dragons, gazelles, hyenas, lizards, foxes, tigers, lions, jackals, buzzards and a wide variety of various birds.

“Schleichen”<sup>33</sup> and “kriechen”<sup>34</sup> are among the most frequent forms of movement specified in these pages, and “hocken”<sup>35</sup> is often used to describe a person seated. Food is devoured (“verschlungen”) and there is a great deal of “Tappen”<sup>36</sup> that goes on. The humans in the story are said to scent, hunt, chase, buzz, squawk, sniff, snuffle, croak, pounce, scratch, stamp, bellow, roar, prance, gnaw, trot, caw, snarl, snort, growl, bark, drone, lurk, spring and frisk. Falk repeatedly compares Bronja’s hands to little paws, and her bones to the bones of a bird. He wonders, “Warum sehe ich uns alle ... vor jedwedem Rivalen den Kopf einziehn ...?”<sup>37</sup> (230), and so compares people with turtles. Later, when hurt and in pain, he moves along the floor “bäuchlings weiter”<sup>38</sup> (250) like a snake. Even the sea is understood as a great animal, whereby Falk on vacation is aware of “das Stampfen und Stöhnen der schwer sich wälzenden, der nur allmählich ermattenden See”<sup>39</sup> (152).

Not surprisingly, allusions to hunting, the hunt and capture are frequent. References to “Spüren”<sup>40</sup> come up often, and there is further referral made to booty, traps, felled prey, bait and lying in wait. Falk, when angry or hurt, effectively becomes an animal, either the hunter of smaller, weaker animals or given over to suffering. At times, he consciously views Bronja as his prey. “Er, Falk hat Bronja aufgehalten, eingefangen”<sup>41</sup> (149).

The paradox here is that, as a human being, the protagonist is weak and ineffectual. Put him at a crossroads and he is paralyzed. He cannot decide what to do, nor think of what to say. Falk almost never takes action. He is the epitome of the passive man. Faced with Taufik’s earnest questioning, “Falk antwortet nicht”<sup>42</sup> (216). Filled with soaring hope and myriad questions, Falk “wagt nicht zu fragen”<sup>43</sup> (216). When a single word could mean the difference between life and death, “Falk findet das Wort nicht”<sup>44</sup> (278). When Karoline walks out the door, despite a strong urge to hold her back, “er läßt sie

gehen. Er folgt ihr nicht"<sup>45</sup> (105). And when he does finally bring himself to say or do something, "ist es zu spät wie immer, wie jedesmal"<sup>46</sup> (164).

At those times when Falk does not view the world in terms of the animal kingdom, he understands it in military terms. There are over two hundred allusions to war, battle or to military conditions in general, not to mention several dozen references to the related topic of imprisonment and escape (perhaps from a prisoner-of-war camp). Falk's world is a battleground, and when his animal instincts do not take over, he understands it from the perspective of the foot soldier, not the general. Other people are enemies and danger is the continual condition. When Falk takes Bronja shopping for clothes, he battles a battalion of salesclerks. "Ein Trupp, jetzt von jungen Verkäuferinnen, die eben noch in strengster Konzentration die Köpfe zusammensteckten, um lästige Kundinnen abzuwehren, wird aufmerksam"<sup>47</sup> (90). A visit from his mother is understood by both of them as war: "[U]m der Alten zu begegnen, um ihren Angriffen standzuhalten oder sie zu parieren, ist äußerste Geistesgegenwart vonnöten"<sup>48</sup> (106). The appearance of the Little Gaunt One is received along the same lines. "[H]ier findet ein Kampf statt, ein stummes, atemloses Ringen, als ginge es, wie in wirklichen Kämpfen, um nichts weniger als um die Existenz"<sup>49</sup> (229).

Falk's daily life is pictured as a series of "Angriffen," "Widerstand," "Kämpfen und Siegen," "Niederlagen" and "Trotzmanöver."<sup>50</sup> His world view includes technocrats who "march" ["marschieren"] as "an army" ["im Heer"] and teachers who regularly produce a "counter strike" ["Gegenschlag"] in the face of Falk's resistance to their proposals. In his mind, even his friends group together "und hecken schon einen Schlachtplan aus"<sup>51</sup> (235) against him. One reason for his impotence and passivity is his conviction "daß Gegenwehr nutzlos ist. Er besitzt keine Waffen"<sup>52</sup> (107). Sometimes, however, his actions belie this belief.

As might be expected, where there is both war and ferocious beasts, death lies around the corner. Images of both death and blood figure prominently, although they take a back seat to the animal and military metaphors. Falk's mother fears that "man wird sie verscharren ... Niemals wird der Sohn ihr Grab besuchen"<sup>53</sup> (109) [ellipses the author's]. Willi, Jörg's son, buries Bronja in sand at the beach. Bronja injures her leg while jumping from too high a perch and there is "Blut, schon wieder Blut"<sup>54</sup> (208). Bronja dreams of death and remembers the death of her sister, Ira. Willi attempts suicide by "totspringen"<sup>55</sup> after he learns that Bronja is sleeping with Percy. There is talk of "Todesmitleid," "Tödliche Leidenschaften," "Todesängste" and being "totmüde."<sup>56</sup>

The overall atmosphere of this fictional world, it is easy to see, is bleak and grim. It is a modern, twentieth-century world in which fragmentation rules. But is wholeness or the hope of wholeness entirely absent? Clearly, one of its main ingredients, that of community, is missing from Falk's small universe. He finds neither unity, nor acceptance, nor cohesion with others, whether in the family or with any other group. He is said to have friends — he himself identifies several others as such — but is it an oversatement to maintain that he participates in a community of friendship? Do his friendships offer both integration and differentiation, or provide the setting for both liberation and commitment, in keeping with Thiessen's definition? Do they invite interpersonal security and serve as a context for vocation? Do they present opportunities for truthfulness, intimacy and recognition? Do they offer structure and stability? In every case, the answer is no.

"Freunden engen ein, binden fest,"<sup>57</sup> (57) Falk believes. Of the friends he calls by their first names, Paul never appears. During the six year course of the narrative, Paul does not visit Falk, nor vice versa. It is implied that the occasional telephone conversation takes place, and that this is how Falk learns that Paul has sired a fourth child by a fourth girlfriend. This is also how Paul lines him up with a potential client when Falk is desperate

for work. Although he has known Paul since his student days, there is little evidence of a close or current relationship.

It is true that Percy plays a much more active role in Falk's life, yet even before he aids Bronja in her escape, it is an ambivalent part. Although they have known each other since childhood, and share memories of a marvelous trip through Italy on foot during their college years, Falk holds Percy in contempt. Theirs is, to some extent, an adversarial relationship. Falk views Percy as a conformist and as a sly, crafty, cunning beast. He is an alcoholic and slightly depraved, in Falk's eyes. Their frequent verbal sparring has a dangerous edge. Percy is the "legitimate" artist, a painter and an art teacher at a conservatory in the former West Berlin. It is Falk's observation that Percy's paintings follow whatever trend currently holds sway in the art world, and as such are unoriginal, bourgeois, illegitimate. Percy's melodramatic "friendship speech" strikes the reader as emerging from ulterior motives, even before he makes off with Bronja. His words seem as little truthful or forthright as his art does to Falk. When Percy refers to those who speak with forked tongues, he could as well be pointing at himself.

Jörg alone of the these men, is identified by Falk as a true friend. Jörg's virtue? He "sitzt still, erklärt nichts, schweigt, wartet ab ..." <sup>58</sup> (252). At one tense moment, Jörg offers a distraction in the form of an anecdote. Jörg is just there, from time to time, including sometimes, but not always, at the most crucial moments. He doesn't say much and doesn't ask anything of Falk. This is what counts as friendship for Falk.

As Bronja reminds him, Falk's personal maxim is, "Sprechen bringt nichts. Außer Unglück" <sup>59</sup> (199), and is sometimes also expressed as, "[M]an müßte nicht reden" <sup>60</sup> (232). What disturbs him about most people is the same thing that bothers him about Bronja's teacher. "Diese Frau hält keinen Abstand. ... [A]lles will Körper- und

Seelenkontakt, rückt dir auf den Pelz; ach, die ganze Welt — ausgenommen nur noch die Tiere im Wald — kommt zu nahe!”<sup>61</sup> (65).

Accordingly, Falk projects friendship onto Taufik, the doctor who lives on a lower floor. They never address each other by their first names. While at one point Falk believes he understands the motivations behind Taufik’s behavior: “Er kennt den Freund. Sie sind so eng miteinander verbunden, wie man nur in einem Mietshaus dieser Stadt verbunden sein kann; das heißt: stärker als in jedem normalen Freundschaftsverhältnis”<sup>62</sup> (214-15), at a more lucid moment, he describes him as, “Taufik, der so etwas wie ein Freund ist”<sup>63</sup> (177). From Falk’s perspective, the bonds of friendship in this city are not as strong as those between neighbors in rented apartments. Yet those bonds, however strong they may be, are not exactly friendship.

Normal conditions for Falk are those of little contact with others. He works from home, where he has his own darkroom. There are months during which no one knocks at his door and weeks where no one calls. Falk does not find this upsetting. “Es hat auch keiner mehr klingeln sollen; nie hat er irgend jemanden vermißt”<sup>64</sup> (81). Although obvious from Falk’s actions, near the end of the novel his preference for solitude over company is put into words: “[U]nd endlich heimwärts zu treideln, in die Stille der leeren Wohnung zurück, in die altgewohnte, wunderbare, die lebensrettende Einsamkeit”<sup>65</sup> (246).

It is not surprising to learn that “Falk spricht mit niemandem”<sup>66</sup> (82), nor to discover that he is the subject of others’ gossip. A single man, a recluse, one who barely gives his neighbors the time of day, returns home one evening with a child in tow. It is certain to set the neighbors to speculating, especially where the man in question remains unapproachable. But Falk, although he was a lonely child, has not always been so completely withdrawn from society. During his years of study, he did once seek out the company of others, although he never really felt at one with them.

Er allein und die anderen; der eine, die vielen, von Matti zusammengebracht, zusammengezwungen zu einer Gesellschaft, einer Gemeinschaft von Gleichgesinnten, die Tage, Nächte lang in Kneipen hockten, in halbleeren und verräucherten Zimmern, im Audimax auf den Tischen — und wie gern hat er sich daruntergemischt, ist eingetaucht und untergetaucht und mit den vielen mitgeschwommen.<sup>67</sup> (222)

Despite never quite belonging to this group, Falk had been emotionally drawn to this form of community. He is not sure what drove him from the group and into social hibernation. Perhaps the reason he goes through spells where he haunts the local pub, is that he hopes to recreate the tenuous connections he felt with this group during his time as a student.

Those days long behind him, Falk shuns others unless absolutely necessary. The trash collector, the man who brings the drinks, Taufik on the ground floor and Karoline are the only persons with whom he has regular human contact. Bronja is the exception to his isolation. What Falk would prefer, is for the world to leave him alone with Bronja. But his paranoia is too strong for him to enjoy it when it happens. When the phone and the doorbell both remain quiet for several weeks, Falk begins to imagine that the people who are not calling and not visiting are plotting against him.

Even Karoline comes under suspicion. Falk is incapable of bonding romantically in order to form even the smallest unit of community. Falk treasures Karoline in his fashion. He is grateful that she slipped into his life. Sometimes he is so grateful, that he makes promises he will surely break: “Er ... nimmt sich vor, von jetzt an nichts mehr ohne sie zu tun, sie bei Entscheidungen um Rat zu fragen”<sup>68</sup> (136). Falk values Karoline partly for the fact that she has her own life separate from his. “Sie haben ihren Beruf, ihr Leben, jeder das seine ...”<sup>69</sup> (11). He cherishes her for the way she never requires anything of him, for how she doesn’t get in his way when she’s around. What Falk likes best about Karoline is

the fact that she so little impacts his life when present. He finds her presence subtly soothing and comforting. She says little and her movements are quiet. She doesn't complain or demand. No promises are made and none are sought. "[N]ie je haben sie von Heirat, geschweige denn von Nachwuchs gesprochen"<sup>70</sup> (11), although they've been a couple for several years. He believes, however, that he will never leave her. This is not the same thing as being determined to remain with her.

The fact is, that Karoline periodically slips out of Falk's life, and that her absence only eventually dawns on him over a period of time. They had planned to get an apartment together, but those intentions were wordlessly terminated when he took Bronja under his wing. The two females take to each other from the beginning, so these plans are not dashed on this account. Subconsciously, despite his rationalization that "Dabei — wie vorher — kein Gedanke, daß er das Mädchen als Geliebte wollte. Er hat Karoline"<sup>71</sup> (15), it is the girl he wants. His affection for Karoline is genuine, but not deeply rooted. For a time, "Sie spielen Familie. Als brauchten sie niemanden außer sich ..."<sup>72</sup> (158) Then, Karoline drifts away again, Falk rationalizing that she looks in when he and Bronja are not at home. Falk, the man of inaction, does not call her and does not think to visit her in *her* apartment. When Bronja takes seriously ill, he wants to call her, he wants to beg her to come, but, unsure of his motives (and out of habit) refrains. He finally realizes that:

So unaufdringlich ihre Anwesenheit war, so unerträglich wird ihm ihre Abwesenheit. Ihm fehlt ihre Stimme, ihre Blicke und ihre Berührungen. Auch die Geduld, ihn zu ertragen. Oder: Die Seelenruhe, mit der sie sich auf Distanz hält. Er meint, sie deutlicher zu spüren jetzt, aus der Entfernung stärker. Als sähe er sie.<sup>73</sup> (213)

But still he doesn't call, convinced that no reasonable woman would understand what has gone on inside him since he brought Bronja home. It does not dawn on Falk to consider

that no reasonable woman could be expected to understand how she could just walk out of his life unnoticed. Although he insists that “Da, wo sie ist, ist auch er zu Haus”<sup>74</sup> (275), this form of being at home does not seem to be something he values highly enough to act upon.

One reason for the poverty of Falk’s relationships is, as already mentioned, that he chooses silence over conversation and above truthful dialogue, thus stifling interaction and effectively prohibiting the growth of intimacy and interdependence. Although near the end of the novel, he finally questions the utility of this mode of living, asserting to Bronja on the telephone, “Auch Schweigen, Bronja, kann Lüge sein”<sup>75</sup> (233), the acknowledgment comes too late — and is too feeble to overcome a lifetime habit.

Another factor that contributes to Falk’s remoteness is that he prefers to live in a world of the imagination. His environment is peopled by images, rather than by persons. He and Bronja often watch television together. He is a photographer, his biological father was a painter, Percy is a painter and Karoline’s parents are both actors. Photographs and paintings portray an assemblage of elements, some of them imaginary — especially in the case of painting — that are ordered by a directive mind. A photographer generally works from actual objects or persons, selecting the lighting, choosing the angle, setting the exposure. In addition, Falk has all of the latest technology of the twentieth century at his disposal. Both computers and a scanner are mentioned in the text. This can reasonably be expected to give him the ability to alter images more dramatically than could his professional forebears, and to use images without coming in actual contact with the real persons or objects they represent.

Falk has an intense visual orientation. When he shifts to photography from studies that would eventually have led to certification as an elementary school teacher, he begins to assemble a series of portraits as a sort of personal collection. This series is composed of

photographs of authors of the German Romantic period, as well as other well-known personalities, along with some unknowns. Many of those featured are melancholics and all of the pictures show them in their youth. In addition, Falk obsesses around two particular photos; one of his mother taken in her youth, and one of a Spanish woman identified as Francisca Sabasa y Garcia.<sup>76</sup> Not one of these pictures is the result of Falk's own camera work. He rips them from magazines, cuts them out of newspapers. Some are actual, physical photographs taken by unidentified professionals.

Falk is in love with his young mother as she is pictured in that old photograph. He is also half in love with Francisca Sabasa y Garcia, because of her resemblance to his mother in her youth. Based on that photo and his memories, his young mother is at least half gypsy. Falk sees the gypsy in Bronja and is reminded of her. His relationships with Bronja and his mother are unconsciously deeply intertwined. On the one hand, he wants a second chance to keep his mother youthful in Bronja. On the other hand, he wants to sleep with his mother, to act out his own Oedipus complex, by sleeping with Bronja. For her foster father, the child is the personification of a representation acted upon by the imagination. It is doubtful that Bronja is ever an individual subject to Falk.

Shortly after he first lays eyes on the child, Falk reflects: "Was immer das Mädchen erlebt haben mag, ob es im Elend aufgewachsen ist, in Armut, mit Hunger, Verbrechen sogar, oder still, im Windschatten der Ereignisse — er will nichts davon wissen. Nichts von dem Ort, an dem es gelebt hat, nichts von den häuslichen Verhältnissen. Er will sich selbst eine Vorstellung machen"<sup>77</sup> (12). Vaguely informed that Bronja comes from Eastern Europe, Falk decides that her homeland lies beyond the Urals. In reality, the child is likely no more from beyond the Ural Mountains than Falk's biological father is still to be found in the Argentine Pampas.

Years later, after Bronja has entered her teens and Falk feels betrayed by her actions, which could well be those of a prisoner seeking freedom, he protests indignantly to himself: “Auch wenn ich dich nicht erfunden habe, habe ich dich nicht weitergedacht? Bist du nicht meiner Vorstellung gefolgt, gehorsam und beinahe freiwillig? Haben wir dich nicht auf diese Weise, im Wechsel von Härte und Nachgiebigkeit, von Freiheit und Zwang, zu deiner schönsten Gestalt gebracht?”<sup>78</sup> (176). Later, he asks himself, “Ist sie nicht geworden, wie er sie wollte ...?”<sup>79</sup> (186). Six years under the same roof with virtually only each other for company are not enough to dissavow Falk of the fiction that she is an artwork of his own sculpting.

Hers is the image that jump-starts his photo-series and moves it forward from where it had stopped at the end of World War II. Gazing on her as she sleeps one night, soon after she has come to live with him, the thought erupts like a revelation: “[A]us Wirklichkeit und Vorstellung gebildet, aus Gegenwart, Vergangenheit und Zukunft zusammengedacht, das Bild der Bilder: das Kind und der Geist dieses Kindes in einem — exakt die Bronja aus dieser Nacht”<sup>80</sup> (50). From the first, the child is a projection, a representation, a creation in the eyes of her legal guardian, as he struggles with the question of how to rear her so that she will conform to his mental image. Books, fictional works in particular, and relative isolation is the path he chooses. The decision to lock her away from others is partly selfish, partly due to his own fierce separation from others and partly because of his understanding, projected from photography onto life: “Jedes Foto, jedes Gemälde, das man verkleinert, denkt Falk, nimmt an Schärfe zu”<sup>81</sup> (152). By shrinking her physical world, while allowing her free access to images, he is convinced he can keep her from melting into generality.

Falk is captivated both by the visual image that can be placed on a wall or in a book, and by the visual impressions his mind conjures up when reading, particularly when

reading fiction. In addition to understanding life as a battle between competing military forces, and as a chase between the hunter and the hunted, Falk also views life as a story and stories as guiding. When life is going well, “Natürlich weiß Falk, daß in den neueren Geschichten — doch immerhin seit Jahrhunderten schon — mit der Erreichung des Ziels erst alles Ungemach beginnt: Das eben unter Glockenklang geschlossene Bündnis ist gleich am nächsten Tag bedroht. Böse Geister suchen die Glücklichen heim”<sup>82</sup> (159). He is accordingly on his guard, anxious, waiting for the hammer to drop, yet frustrated at his own belief of being fated to struggle, and in his faith in the modern novel. “Aber müssen die neuen Geschichten denn stets im Recht sein? So wie die alten immer im Unrecht? Können sich nicht die einen wie die anderen irren?”<sup>83</sup> (159).

Falk, who has faith in fictions, longs for the happy endings found in fairy tales. Why shouldn't he? He peoples his worlds with fictions, drawing on ancient lore. In his mind, Bronja becomes the fairy tale princess. Matti, his old mother and the Little Gaunt One become witches. His young mother, of course, is a gypsy, who, in Falk's private mythology, trips barefoot over stubblefields and struggles alone through World War II in a form of ennobling poverty. There is an emphasis on fantasizing and the fantastic, and Bronja is given free rein to read as she pleases. In fact, Falk's first self-erected rule of child-rearing becomes a resolve “nie je in seine Geschichten ein[zu]brechen ...”<sup>84</sup> (57).

Falk is fully aware of the potential of this form of education.

So hat er es am eignen Leib erfahren: Bringt einer nur genügend Geduld auf, sich in die phantasierte Welt hineinzuleben, wird er über kurz oder lang fest darin wohnen, werden die erfundenen Figuren zu Freunden (zu Feinden auch), werden fremde Pläne sich mit eigenen verbinden (oder sie durchkreuzen); wird er sich die Geschichten zu Ende erzählen.<sup>85</sup> (133)

Like many parents, he is subtly attempting to mold his child in his own image, or, in Walter Thiessen's words, Falk falls into the human tendency we have to "project our own inner realities onto the people around us" (59). Under his tutelage, Bronja tries to make of her life *Wuthering Heights*. She casts herself in the Catherine role and assigns to Falk the part of Heathcliff, the unrelated member of her family, the protagonist in a drama of passion and confusion.

His penchant for fantasy regularly overrides his senses. Sometimes Falk is aware that he is spinning stardust webs, and ridicules himself back to reason. He catches himself losing reality at Matti's as he waits for a decision on Bronja, fantasizing a drama taking place at a fountain between a witch and a princess involving a magic golden ball. "Was Ball, was Brunnen!"<sup>86</sup> (30) he shakes himself aware, much as he does later when he reminds himself that "es gab auch keine Königin dort"<sup>87</sup> (88) in Ravenna where he and Percy had vacationed, and again, when he catches himself seeking a Parzival for Bronja: "Was Schicksal, was Parzival!"<sup>88</sup> (134) Near the novel's end, he dispels himself of one of the myths that frequently provides the ending for a conventional love story: "Was für ein Blödsinn! Der Traum vom gemeinsamen Ende ..."<sup>89</sup> (155).

Stories here, and both Falk's and Bronja's relationship to them, do not play the healthy role in their lives that several of our scholars insist is crucial to wholeness. Philosopher Carl Vaught contends that such stories unify reflection and experience, and lead the reader to conclude that wholeness is a religious phenomenon. But the stories with which these characters fill their heads divert their attentions from experience and serve to remove them from the world around them. Additionally, the tales that attract them are remarkable in the absence of God from the plot. Bronja is drawn to novels of love and death, among which her favorite is the aforementioned *Wuthering Heights*. Falk absorbs pre-Christian fairy tales and pagan folk tales from various lands.

Stories also function in the service of wholeness, maintains theologian Walter Thiessen, where they provide a common symbol system which supplies one binding element of a community, as well as equipping the individuals concerned with the tools by which to make sense of an encounter with God. This is clearly not the case here, as Bronja and Falk do not even share the same fantasy world, let alone participate together with persons outside their enclave. When Percy at one point accuses Falk, Bronja and Karoline of “Sektenbilden zu dritt”<sup>90</sup> (166), he is not far off the mark. Nevertheless, their “sect” does not share a common narrative. Nor do the narratives in which Falk and Bronja immerse themselves lead to the building of a symbol system that “counters inner illusions” (Thiessen, Abstract). If anything, the tales in which they ground themselves create a wall of fantasy and further separate them from the world at large, as well as from each other.

To lead toward wholeness, Thiessen maintains, a symbol system must be comprehensive, and it must result in rituals and traditions that are rooted in the past while helping to make sense of the present. None of these conditions are satisfied here. Instead, Falk has developed conflicting symbol systems through which he alternately reads his environment as one of animal warfare, human warfare or magic. And although the narratives he adopts for guidance do, indeed, meet Thiessen’s criteria of embodying movement, Falk’s own efforts at reflection do not much incorporate this aspect into his life. Rather than take on the hero’s instrumentality, Falk embraces the heroic resignation aspect of these ancient tales. His only movement, until very near the end of the story, is from West to East, toward bondage in the wilderness, while yet remaining in bondage to his origins. When Falk finally leaps into action, it is either destructive (his attempted rape of Bronja) or useless (tracking Bronja’s possible paths through the city).

Rather than serving to unify experience and reflection, which Vaught insists is the task of the narrative in the quest for wholeness, and to lead toward both grounding and

contact with the eternal, the role of the imaginative written word here is to illuminate the path to destruction. Falk is reflective to a degree, and he does manage to skirt what Vaught cites as two common traps on the road to wholeness, namely, the drive to act rather than speak, and the tendency to demand complete comprehension. He is limited, instead, by his passivity, which restricts his experience. “[F]ragmentation is not a problem that can be dealt with at the exclusively reflective level,” (9) the philosopher stresses. Another limitation is that rather than bringing reason to bear, Falk approaches the narrative with paranoia and imagination, and through these filters forces a connection with the present.

Clearly, Falk suffers from the “inner distortion of reality and relational patterns” (26) that Thiessen labels idolatrous, because no space is made for God. Both Vaught and Thiessen argue that there is no wholeness without the dimension of the divine. Religion, for Falk, seems a confused picture of images and phrases that refer more to art and turns of speech than to any spiritual dimension. When relieved, Falk will aspirate a quick “Gottseidank,”<sup>91</sup> and he also employs the name of God in some light oaths.<sup>92</sup> He more frequently curses in the name of the devil, wishing perceived opponents or established bureaucracies “zum Teufel”<sup>93</sup> (25, 80, 184) or wondering what or how “zum Teufel”<sup>94</sup> (31, 18, 71) the current topic or situation has anything to do with himself. In addition, as a figure of speech, Falk occasionally refers to the idea of a “Doomsday” as “das Jüngste Gericht” or “Sankt Nimmerleinstag,” both expressions with religious, specifically Christian, overtones. But most prevalent of all are references to angels, creatures Falk associates with religion the way he associates swans with fairy tales. Angels are one of the many winged images he projects onto Bronja, images that seem more closely related to paintings from an earlier century than to stories or teachings from the Bible. Percy sarcastically refers to her as an “Engelchen,”<sup>95</sup> (166) but Falk is more interested in the idea of the guardian angel as her protector. Bronja’s fascination with carvings and statues of

angels, particularly the angel of Victory in the central park, furthers the association. But he does not take comfort long in this image, fearing that global warming has driven all guardian angels away from the earth, conscious also of the stone-cast angels decorating tombstones at the cemetery, and their association with death, rather than life.

There is no evidence that any of the characters have any form of spiritual consciousness or seek any sort of spiritual dimension in their lives. Falk's reflexive description of his confession to Jörg as a "Beichte vor Zeugen"<sup>96</sup> (252) has the same tongue-in-cheek flavor as does his reference to tourists referring to their guidebooks as if praying the rosary (273). Bronja raises questions about love, sex and death (always linked for women in the Western fiction traditions), but never in the context of an extra-temporal dimension. God is absent from Falk's world.

Another impediment to community is Falk's basic distrust of others, a trait that makes honesty difficult. Falk conceals a secret, the secret of his base nature, and, as in Luisa Josefina Hernández's novel *Las fuentes ocultas*, there are a great many hiding places and much that is secreted or veiled. "Verbergen," "verheimlichen" and "verstecken"<sup>97</sup> appear with regularity. Bronja has secret corners and hide-aways. She slips out stealthily at night, having, unbeknownst to all, worked the rusty lock to the servant's entrance loose and lubricated it. Information is exchanged via "tüscheln" and "flüstern."<sup>98</sup> Her background, with the exception of an account of her sister's death, remains hidden. In like manner, little of Karoline's inner life is ever known. Her thoughts, wishes, preferences, fears, etc. are kept secret within her psyche. Her life before knowing Falk, and her hours spent away from him, remain out of view, as well.

Putting on a disguise can also be an effective means of concealment, one Falk makes use of when negotiating turf with the Little Gaunt One. Both parties say things they absolutely do not mean, some of which are blatant lies. Falk acts the part of the gracious

host, while the Little Gaunt One assumes the role of the grateful guest. Later in the narrative, Bronja disguises herself as a sick, passive child, and because Falk has known her primarily through images, he falls for her deception. The practice he has had at identifying Percy's psychic costume changes — from professor to artist to philosophizing drunk — does not prepare him for this form of guile in Bronja.

The persistent East/West motif is linked both to concealment, and to the theme of imprisonment that springs from both the hunting and the military allusions. Although the Berlin wall encircled West Berlin, its true purpose was to keep East Berliners caged within their own country, in a sense, secreted from the Western world. Falk, in moving from what was formerly West Berlin to a part of the city that stands in the former East Berlin, a move he describes as “seiner Flucht von West nach Ost ...”<sup>99</sup> (179), symbolically walls himself in, as he does with his stories, his pictures and his isolation. His illusions about his new neighborhood are rapidly dispelled, and any release he projected would be found there ceases to be sought. All of the “good” things are still said to be found “drüben,” over there, on the other side. Bronja insists on shopping for clothes “drüben.” She insists on cake from “drüben.” Falk raids the other section of the city occasionally, returning home with booty from his forays. Yet he remains behind both a wall and an iron curtain of his own making.

This self-imprisonment further contributes to Falk's distance from any of the communities that could contribute in a quest for wholeness. An examination of the fictional world of *Am großen Stern* systematically reveals the absence of wholeness, a world of fragmentation, and doubts about the existence of a search for meaning. The lack of the former is attested to by the non-existence of community, and the paucity of acknowledgment of the eternal as detailed above. In addition, the journey or quest

necessary for wholeness is at best a stunted or truncated version of that discussed in Chapter Two.

Rather than a calling out of bondage into the wilderness to an encounter with God, or in the sense of a rite-of-passage, Falk flees to the wilderness to imprison himself. In Thiessen's understanding, the seeker, the maturing individual, leaves behind a community s/he experiences as binding, and enters into a marginal state. Falk does, indeed, separate himself from the chums of his university days, but he does so because he lacks connecting ties with them, not because he feels constrained. Not surprisingly, lacking both community and the coherent symbol system that is found there, Falk finds neither God nor himself in the wilderness and is stranded there by his own passivity.

His is a response Walter Thiessen fails to consider when he lists possible reactions to unresolved fragmentation. Falk does not tread the path of conformity, nor seek membership in a highly centralized community, nor does he pursue analytic therapy in order to accept his barren state. There is also no turn toward fundamentalism, as Vaught might expect. Instead, he goes beyond acceptance of his condition: Falk luxuriates in the sterility of his self-imposed exile and seeks to increase the rigor of these conditions whenever possible. Although Thiessen insists that one does not go to the wilderness to be alone, his comments apply only to those seeking an antidote to the fragmentation they experience. But Falk's is no wholeness journey. It is a form of psychic suicide. Falk equates the wilderness with death. "Wer die Wüste erfahren will, muß das Sterben erfahren. Der Tod gehört dazu ..." <sup>100</sup> (70).

Such is also evident when examined in light of Carl Vaught's understanding of the quest, as he points out the bi-directionality of it when directed toward fulfillment. "[It] is possible to stand in a positive relationship with the past and with the future from a variety of temporal perspectives. However, the important part to notice is that wholeness can be

found, not only by moving outward toward the larger world, but also by standing face to face with the origins of our original existence” (5). Rather than driving toward the future or confronting the past, Falk remains mired in the latter, despite his desperation to escape it. He does not so much face his origins as he is manipulated by them. Instead, he makes of his present a past in that he is a character in stasis. Falk engages the past in his focus on stories and images from a former time: A prior war, a pre-civilized era, the medieval age, the youth of Romantic poets, his own mother’s younger years.

Falk never unshackles himself from the tensions and suffering that drive him from his family. The belittling treatment he received at the hands of his stepfather is never forgiven, understood or overcome. He also remains emotionally chained to his mother in ways that further a mutually destructive relationship. His young mother, the one he idealizes, was smothering: “[S]ie will neben ihm liegen, sie schiebt sich heran, sie hockt auf seiner Brust, auf seinem Kopf, er liegt wie ehemals, von Furcht geschüttelt, atemlos ... und gleich wieder wie früher fühlt er sich schuldig”<sup>101</sup> (44). [Ellipses are the author’s.] This aspect of their relationship continues with his old mother, as highlighted by Falk’s admission immediately following one of her visits, when he feels the sensations his mother experiences, despite the fact that she is on a train and the physical distance between them is increasing every minute: “Kein Computer hat es ihm bewiesen; allein die teuflische Symbiose, in der er mit der Mutter lebte und noch immer lebt, die ihn niemals von ihr loskommen läßt, sie hat zur Folge, daß er sie berechnen kann”<sup>102</sup> (173) Tethered as he is to his origins, Falk is able only to form a false family, not a holy Trinity, but a cult of three, that is neither a stake in the future nor a point from which to confront an infinite dimension.

Within the context of the journey toward wholeness, Vaught also draws attention to the importance of individuality and the role of the dialogue. Although he can rightly insist

under these conditions that, “[I]t is his [sic] uniqueness that must be developed if the individual is to be given access to the meaning of his [sic] own existence,” (24) he also foresees an inherent danger, one which perfectly fits the situation in Falk’s case: “The characteristics that distinguish one individual from another often set him in radical contrast with others, and they sometimes serve to accentuate the fragmentation that compels him to undertake the quest for fulfillment” (26).

Falk begins his journey from a point of fragmentation and makes no progress toward overcoming or ameliorating this condition. He is clearly an example of the “atomistic fragmentation” Greenberg outlines in his book. Falk suffers from (self-imposed) isolation, loneliness and disconnection from others. His individuality is overdeveloped, and he pushes himself to a posture of extreme exclusivity. He engages in what Dennis Brown describes as “compulsive personal ritual” in the form of counting each step when either ascending or descending. In addition, Falk is situated in a world in which fragmentation is the normative condition.

Characterized by an urban environment that assaults his senses with speed and noise whenever he emerges from his cage, Falk comments that, “Taglich wieder erstaunt ihm die rasende, zunehmend schneller werdende Autojagd so nahe bei seiner verschlossenen Strae, als lage sein Haus dort auf einer Insel und ware wie auf einer solchen gleichzeitig wild umbraust und doch geschutzt. Des Nachts stellt er sich manchmal vor, in einem Wasserschlo zu wohnen, dessen Zugbrucken hochgezogen sind”<sup>103</sup> (74). This pace, common to the twentieth-century, is coupled with rapid change, as the rubble remaining from WWII is cleared away by modern machines and their operators, who are building the new capital of a re-united Germany. The onslaught of the media is also quietly present, although down-played, in the text. Television, newspapers, computers and film

are omnipresent and seem as natural in the novel as they do in modern lives, yet contribute to segmentation and stress.

Along with the urban surroundings, the loss of nature described by both Morgan and Greenberg plays its role. In the first place, it is difficult even to find open land or an intact landscape. “Zwar gibt es ein paar bestellte Felder, auch Brachland dazwischen; doch nie kann der Blick ins Weite gehen. Baracken und Blechschuppen halten ihn auf, kleine Datschen oder die schon wieder bröckelnden Fassaden einer halbfertigen Industrieanlage”<sup>104</sup> (270). In second place, when Bronja falls ill, the doctor forbids walks in the green areas outside the outlying suburbs. “Nie mehr ist Natur imstande, ein Kind zu stärken. Nicht die unsere jedenfalls. Natur, wie sie hier erscheint, sagt Taufik, in diesem zerstampften, unterhöhlten, allenthalben vergewaltigten Zustand, kann es nur trübsinnig machen”<sup>105</sup> (205). This has further ramifications where health is concerned, the doctor insists. “Womöglich, sagt er, wird man bald gezwungen sein, noch einmal ganz von vorn zu beginnen, eine andere Medizin zu erfinden, den Veränderungen der Luft, des Wassers, der Erde entsprechend, eine gänzlich neue”<sup>106</sup> (214). When Falk and Bronja do indeed trek outside the city, when they are in fact surrounded by nature, it is at the North Sea, and nature is experienced not as a poison, not as an absence, but as an enemy that seeks to kill them. In all cases, nature, as part of the rhythm of life, is unknown.

The loss of God documented by Greenberg and Morgan has already been discussed, but it is worth mentioning that this fragmenting condition appears to apply not only to Falk, but to his entire orbit. Jörg and Matti do not draw on religious faith when Willi attempts suicide, nor does the experience jolt them into a search for spiritual meaning. Not one of the characters presented seems conscious of the existence of God or of an ultimate, atemporal, extrahuman force of any kind. From this, one can extrapolate that God is commonly missing from Falk’s little universe, and therefore it is not surprising that

values, for Falk, are at minimum distorted, if not nullified altogether, as Morgan maintains is common in the modern setting. Yet Falk refrains from the simple black/white fundamentalist judgments toward which fairy tales and medieval legends might be expected to incline him.

In so far as another indicator of fragmentation is concerned, one can indeed locate evidence of Morgan's claim that work has become meaningless. Although it would be inappropriate to describe Falk's field as overcome by "specialism," his profession does isolate him from others. Falk's income depends on using a skill that can be creative, photography, but in a mechanistic fashion. He works to order, and the subjects are rarely interesting.

Clearly, Falk's passivity and isolation could, in part at least, stem from the emotional atrophy that Morgan believes is one consequence of the presence of these fragmenting factors. Not knowing how to channel feelings, and having been alternately ridiculed and stifled for his feelings as a child, he tries to deaden some of those sensations as an adult.

Interestingly, although the forces responsible for the protean response to fragmentation that Lifton sees are present in the story, there are no examples in the text of a protean self. Instead, Falk's reaction, which has already been described as "atomistic fragmentation" could also be characterized as a form of what Robert Jay Lifton terms "psychic numbing." The elements he lists, "feelings of separation (from nurturing communities, individuals, and principles), of disintegration (of falling apart or fearing that one will), and of stasis (of being stymied, static, immobilized)" (81) can all be fairly applied to the protagonist. In addition, where the scholars who focus on wholeness link the failure to develop useful symbol systems with the failure of community, Lifton, in analyzing fragmentation, believes that psychic numbing combined with "threatening

imagery having to do with death and its equivalents; and impediments to meaning” (207) are responsible for impairment of symbolization. There is as much evidence in the text to support this theory as there is to validate those of Vaught and Thiessen.

Falk does not respond to the conditions of fragmentation with proteanism, nor does he develop a prosaic mentality, as it is outlined by George W. Morgan. He remains ambivalent about science and technology, despite making use of it. He does tend to keep busy, although it is not always directed toward practical ends. He prefers laboratory science to art when imagining a career path for Bronja, yet he relies on story books for knowledge, and does not rein in or quash his imagination when it would be more prudent to do so, while bottling up emotions that could potentially lead to a richer life. Like Morgan’s “prosaic man,” [sic] Falk exults in the predictable, the repeatable, yet at the same time, he distrusts it. He does not delude himself that he will find security there.

Although, in conformity with the prosaic mentality, Falk can be said to live life on the surface (while imagining otherwise), he does, occasionally, sense that something is wrong. The mistake he makes is in equating the missing element with *order*, rather than with wholeness or even humanity. Although in a scientific sense, order stands in opposition to fragmentation, especially in the form that the latter is frequently expressed in physics and related disciplines, namely, as *chaos*. But where the human element is concerned, order is not an antidote to splintering, discontinuity, disjunction, segmentation, etc.

At one point, relatively early in his guardianship of Bronja, he stumbles onto what could have been a healthy path, when he is briefly conscious that he “[w]ill wieder zu Dingen und Menschen ... ins Leben zurück”<sup>107</sup> (75). True to form, Falk does not act upon this insight, at least not until much later, when he attempts to return to the both convivial and threatening society at the pub. Their former companions there receive them more as

traitors than as prodigals, and Falk's last attempt at integration into any form of community fails.

He hardly notices, as he is more convinced that the missing element is order. Accustomed to viewing the pace of life, the decay and the changes in the city around him as signs of chaos, his considered reaction when Bronja bloodies her knees on one of their extensive forays into the city is to determine that, "Sie müssen zu ihrer Arbeit, zur Ordnung und ... ins Gesunde zurück"<sup>108</sup> (212). [Ellipses are the author's.] Falk equates order with health, because he identifies order as the missing element in general, and that includes whatever is wanting at the moment.

When Bronja becomes seriously ill, the presence of others in their apartment opens his eyes to the disorder, including mold and decay, that dominates their rooms and their lives, and he identifies the absent Karoline as an element of order. She is able to appraise and evaluate without condemning, to discipline and regulate without dictating. But he does not call and share this insight with her, he does not admit aloud that he needs her, he does not ask her to come. Once the interruption is over and Falk feels somewhat certain that Bronja's distant relatives have been discouraged for good, in typical fashion, he takes no steps to act upon his conclusions.

When feeling confused, angry, betrayed and slowly losing rational consciousness, however, Falk again clutches at order as a solution. He hears his old mother's voice in his head insisting, "Ordnung ist das halbe Leben,"<sup>109</sup> (244) and methodically begins to straighten and organize what mess Bronja left behind following her escape. As his emotions intensify and the sayings in his mind multiply, Falk resolves to visit her at Percy's, his brain screaming, "Um Klarheit zu schaffen! Und Ordnung! Luft!"<sup>110</sup> (244). In the throes of suffocation by madness, his rational faculties again grasp at the idea of order.

Crawling from Percy's loft, having sexually attacked his foster daughter and been beaten off by his friend, Falk imagines structure, method, system everywhere around him; in the market, in the designs of the product displays, in the recorded music drifting out of open apartment windows beside the sidewalk. He is looking for security in structure, in external systems, which can only rigidify, but not lead in the direction of wholeness. *Am großen Stern* is no *Bildungsroman*.<sup>111</sup> Although there is sorrow in the face of tragedy at the end, no deeper understandings are forged by the protagonist. His character does not mature through the experience, nor does he acquire wisdom that would produce growth or the hope of growth. It is a portrait of an atomistically fragmented individual in a hopelessly fragmented world, an image of alienation, dissipation and disconnection, vividly portrayed by the author on many levels.

*Rovinato: An Attempt at Wholeness in a Fragmented World*

In her first novel, *Rovinato oder Die Seele des Geschäfts*<sup>112</sup> (1981), Reinshagen makes use of the very traditional chapter division layout in which each of the twenty chapters is headed by a title, rather than a number. The story proceeds along roughly chronological lines, interspersed with flashbacks in the form of memory, over the experienced time of nearly three years. The seventeenth chapter takes the form of an aside, breaking from the plot to detail a narrator's ruminations on stories, and the essential nature of individual design in their creation, and their relation to life in the future.

Reinshagen fragments the narrative voice more extremely in *Rovinato* than in any of her other novels, in an attempt at expressing multiplicity as a unitary speaker.<sup>113</sup> First-person singular, first-person plural, various forms of third-person narration and second-person address appear intermixed, at times even within the same sentence, frequently within the same paragraph and generally, within the same chapter. Günther Schloz refers

to this technique as an “Erzählkaleidoskop,”<sup>114</sup> which seems a good description. Unlike Hernández’s “panoramic novel,” a narrative kaleidoscope does not prevent the emergence of a protagonist or protagonists. In addition, it does not present the clearly distinguishable snapshots of characters’ lives that marks Hernández’s form.

Written primarily in the present, past perfect and conditional tenses, the text is a mixture of reported speech<sup>115</sup> and interior monologue. Dozens of idiomatic expressions appear, slang is a regular feature and the language is highly colloquial. Punctuation is erratic. As in *Am Großen Stern*, sentence fragments and run-on sentences abound. Colons and semi-colons indicate pause length, rather than sentence linkage. The form of address often changes within the sentence, as though original material and the narrator’s thoughts were smashed together to form a sentence without any authorial reworking whatsoever. This intentional fragmentation is reinforced through the mention of the nineteenth-Century German Romantic poet, Novalis (126), who, along with several of the other authors who comprised this literary movement, defended and employed the fragment as a legitimate and useful literary form.

The presumed narrator is Rovinato himself, the nineteen-year-old apprentice who jots down fragments into a notebook he carries, and who several times comments on the gaps in the stories and his own role in expanding the narrative. “Die schweigen dir den Anfang der Geschichte einfach tot; er muß ihn zeugenlos sich selbst zusammenreimen,”<sup>116</sup> (84) he notes with frustration. At another point, when the tellers’ voices drop to a whisper, it is the end of the story he’s left to construct by himself. Sometimes all he is able to gather by eavesdropping are pieces, and he must find a way to string them together. The pages in his notebook are filled with these partial narratives, as well as with individual words that strike him, and stray information, such as all seven of a co-worker’s given names or place names that figure in the stories he either overhears, or which are confided to him. In

addition, Rovo reads so much that “da er sein Leben halb gelebt und halb gelesen hat, ist er nicht sicher: hat er die Erlebnisse erlebt oder sind sie nur aus einem Buch gewesen”<sup>117</sup> (13). He reads, he hears, experiences, witnesses, learns and overhears particles, chunks and splinters of the lives of his co-workers, which he then — dreamily, imaginatively — expands, fills in, augments and colors.

But if Rovo, as he is commonly known, is the narrator, then the stories that make up the novel are narrated *through* him rather than *by* him. The odd tense and subject juxtapositions support this, as do the many unflattering depictions of the youth, who is described at various times as “einem so dummen, weltunerfahrenen Stift”<sup>118</sup> (39), “dem kleinen Strohkopf”<sup>119</sup> (90), “der Bummler”<sup>120</sup> (97), “ein Schlafwandler”<sup>121</sup> (106), “unser Traumtanzer”<sup>122</sup> (132) and “dieser unerzogene Lümmel”<sup>123</sup> (155), although it is also pointed out that the others find him endearing because of these very traits.

The novel itself even asks, “[W]elche Stimme durch ihn gesprochen hatte”<sup>124</sup> (10) and, “Kreisen die Geschichten des Geschäfts ihn ein?”<sup>125</sup> (23). This line of thought, begun in the first chapter, is reiterated — and remains equally unanswered — at the end of the novel. “Denn wer erzählt hier eigentlich was? Woher kommt es? Wer spricht? Wie viele Stimmen müssen sich vereinigen, bis ein Gedanke, bis eine Geschichte entsteht?”<sup>126</sup> asks Rovinato: “Wer, wer denkt wen ... oder ihn, oder mich ... oder was?”<sup>127</sup> (181). And “Was wird dann aus der Geschichte im Kopf?”<sup>128</sup> (181). Are the stories in one’s head lost if that is the only place they remain? Do they need to be written down in order to endure? But also, are they inevitably changed during the time they spend in one’s mind? Does the mind, simply by its nature, being what a mind is, alter the stories that enter, leaving them undeniably changed, whether they remain within or exit in the form of either speech or script?

Jutta Kiencke-Wagner refers to *Rovinato* as the “medium” of the story, rather than its narrator, and maintains, “daß durch und in *Rovinato* das Leben und die unterschiedlichen Schicksale seiner Kollegen zu einem “Einheitskörper” sammenschmelzen, ist das zentrale Thema des Romans”<sup>129</sup> (272). I entirely agree with both parts of this statement. At the level of the plot, unity is approached, if not achieved, through the medium of the apprentice, and it takes the form of community. At the level of the narrative, a sort of confused unity of tone is achieved from the blending of a mish-mash of voices.

It is Kiencke-Wagner’s assertion that *Rovinato* expresses evidence of the same utopian thought she traces through Reinshagen’s dramas, a defensible proposition, but one which I view as an overstatement. The story details an approach to wholeness, rather than a utopia, the road taken being through community, rather than via means of perfecting. And she is only half correct, I maintain, when she states that, “Die Geschichten um das “Medium” *Rovinato* lassen sich bei aller Variation immer wieder auf vier grundlegende Themen zurückführen: Tod, Wahnsinn, Liebe und Träume, bei Reinshagen schon vertraute Themenbereiche”<sup>130</sup> (273). There is strong evidence for claiming death and dreams as two of the major themes of the novel, but love is present as a theme only by its continual absence, and defending madness as a major theme in *Rovinato* would require redefining madness as an average human trait, that is, removing it from the category of “other.” What traditional lunatic presence exists, plays out in the background and around the edges of the main action of the story.

As in *Stern*, the novel is liberally strewn with a variety of *leitmotifs*, including animal imagery, military references, foreign words (English, in particular), religious allusions (specifically Christian), fate and the lesser *leitmotifs* that center on breathing, endurance, the gaze, the hidden, linking, learning and experience, the example,

melancholy, patterns, play, suspicion and testing. Along with death and dreams, community can be defended as a major theme, as can the conglomeration of words (especially names) and stories.

The tale takes place in a large, unnamed German city in the latter part of the 1970s. Germany is still a divided nation, Berlin yet a divided city, the Western portion locked away from the East behind a wall, but these conditions are not specifically referenced. *Rovinato* is concerned with a microcosm of the world, not with the world at large. Even the company's customers are like aliens from a foreign land. This minuscule fragment of the whole is sufficiently alienating, without dealing with the sheer size and variety of what's beyond it. Yet this "beyond" infiltrates Rovo's consciousness regularly in the out-of-date magazines he reads at home with his landlady and the television programs they watch together in the evening.

The fifteen major characters inhabit the modern, pluralistic world of the urban twentieth century. The overlap between them is the employer they share, and this sets them apart from the minor characters. It is a world in turmoil, both the greater world outside the firm, and the microcosm within. Suicide and attempted suicide, gang rape, war, drunkenness, drug addiction, adultery, domestic violence, murder and attempted murder, lies, injustice, illness, duplicity, violence and destruction all form a part of their conscious world. The military motif here differs greatly from that in *Am großen Stern*, however, in that it does not so much turn their landscape into a battleground, as emphasize the lingering effects of the two world wars fought primarily in Europe, in which, in both cases, the Germans played a major role.

The Old Boss fought and was wounded in WWI, and probably colluded with the Nazis during WWII. Rieseberg lost everything of value to her during the second war, and Hertha and her sister were gang-raped by invading Russian soldiers. Flat-footed Panitzke

fought at the end with the boys and the cripples, and spent most of his twenty months in the military in prisoner of war camps. Meanwhile, his wife was having an affair with an African-American occupation soldier. This war has even left its mark on their vocabulary, as they speak of “Kamikazes” and “Harakiri” with the casualness of those who know they are understood. Unlike the protagonists of *Am großen Stern*, they have experienced war either directly or indirectly, and, despite the fact that management, customers and family are frequently viewed as enemies, they do not confuse the alienating world around them with a field of slaughter.

However, also due to the personal experience of war, they are acutely aware of the threat of extinction, much as outlined by both Lifton and Morgan. This is explicitly detailed in Zitzewitz’s letter to Jimmy Carter, then president of the United States of America, the world’s premier nuclear power and developer of the atom bomb. In fear and horror she writes of the building of a bomb, “die das Perfideste und das Infamste darstellt, was ein Menschenhirn zu denken je imstande war, einem Instrument, das, in grausamer Selektion, nur die feine, die empfindende Substanz zerstören soll, wahren die fühllose, tumbe ... am Leben bleibt bis zum jüngsten Tag, wenn man hier überhaupt von Leben sprechen will”<sup>131</sup> (116). Although her letter as a whole strikes the reader as irrational to the point of being amusing, her fears are perhaps more well-grounded than is the general complacency many are able to affect by ignoring modern capabilities for mass self-destruction. Having vividly experienced the yellow star as a symbol designating those bound for destruction at the hands of the Nazis, Zitzewitz now proposes marking those to be saved from atomic destruction with a blue one. Her letter is a reminder of the brutal realities of the modern world.

The animal imagery which is as abundantly present here as in the later novel (over 250 references) is not, however, symbolic of a world that has become bestial, but rather, a

reminder of a vanishing interconnection with nature. Dogs and cats are referenced slightly more than any other animal, thus subtly noting the shift in society away from nature in its original state, to the wild as domesticated by the human being. The whole variety of natural life forms is sprinkled throughout these pages, from the smallest (germs and bacteria) to the largest (elephants) along with the entire range of animal behaviors, from the awe-inspiring to the threatening.

The loss of nature that Greenberg and Morgan have determined is a necessary precondition of fragmentation, is explicitly detailed at various points in these pages. “[D]er Sinn für die Natur gestorben ist: Hier gibt es keine Bäume vorm Fenster, keine Bergrücken, weder natürliche noch künstliche Gewässer, nicht einmal mehr Wolken gibt es über der Stadt”<sup>132</sup> (37) the reader is told. When Ellinor moves to the city, she comes “aus dem Dunst ihrer Ställe und Felder in die Landschaft des Staubs, der Akten, der vernieteten Fenster ...”<sup>133</sup> (101). Then, when the Old Boss and Zitzewitz stumble across a frog in the road that has been injured by a vehicle, “[s]ie stehen staunend — wann sah man zuletzt einen Frosch in Freiheit?”<sup>134</sup> (111) “Es heißt,” she continues, “sie sollen hierzulande beinahe ausgestorben sein”<sup>135</sup> (112). The reasons for this are many and further the picture of the destruction of the natural world: “Zu leicht gehn sie kaputt in den Wiesen, über die Traktoren rollen, in den Feldern, die vergiftet sind, im Wasser, das zuviel Nitrat enthält, in einer Landschaft, die ihnen feindlich ist; alles was schön ist, geht schnell kaputt”<sup>136</sup> (112). For Rovo, a post-war baby born into an urban environment, nature is an abstract concept. In fact, “[d]ie einzige Natur, die Rovo sieht, wenn er auf Botengängen durchs Hause geht, das sind die Haare der Frauen ...”<sup>137</sup> (38). Equating nature with beauty, perhaps, and young enough to be yet at the mercy of his hormones, Rovo has actually landed upon one of the human attributes that in the modern age is least natural. Women’s hair is teased, sprayed, gelled, curled, permed, tinted, dyed, streaked, augmented with hairpieces or

covered with wigs. Thus, women's hair is not only rarely natural, it is oftentimes also hidden, under hats, beneath wigs, by color.

Hair is far from the only thing kept out of view in this environment. Secrets and concealment abounds, as it does both in Reinshagen's later novel and Luisa Josefina Hernández's *Las fuentes ocultas*. There are several good places for hiding things in the firm, the least reliable of which is the desk drawer. There's far more security in stashing what one wishes kept out of sight in either the warehouse or in the basement. Although Abromeit, the shipper, keeps his own liquor buried, one could say, where he works in the basement, he also keeps some vermouth in the warehouse. In fact, most of the employees have something hidden in the warehouse, thanks to its security from detection and to the attitudes of the three warehousemen who work there. Goldie keeps his deep sea diving apparatus there, perhaps as a secret from Hertha; Marisa stows her romance novels in the warehouse, and Rovo parks his small library there; Ellinor has food squirreled away, Ruschigk stashes make-up, and several hide alcohol, Panitzke even going so far as to disguise it as a medicinal tonic, that is, adding a secondary level of concealment.

Objects, however, are but the first rank, the most superficial level, of what's kept hidden at this company. Records of certain business transactions, mostly in the past, now, never see the light of day. Certain nicknames are kept from those who bear them. Intentions are disguised. Within the company, the ambitious attempt to keep their hunger for power from the others. When dealing with customers, both sides seek to disguise their contempt for each other. Thoughts and plans and pieces of stories are masked or silenced. Trust and consolation remain shrouded until most desperately needed. Faces are hidden behind make-up and glasses, ideas rustle beneath silence. Tricks for getting through particularly difficult work days are kept close to the chest. The Young Boss once pursued a parentally forbidden acting career in secret. Rovo hides his home from Ina, lurks outside

the basement window to eavesdrop on Abromeit and Ellinor, and conceals himself in the bushes to spy on Zitzewitz and the Old Boss. This older couple attempt, at first, to hide their relationship from the others. Kastner intends his affair with Marisa to remain a secret from both his wife and his co-workers. In fact, he would prefer to keep all of his stories out of general parlance and indeed, wishes that he had no stories to spread. Hertha, of course, has the biggest secret of all, namely, that Goldie is not her younger brother, but her son, the result of a gang rape during the waning months of the war.

What is not screened from view is equally interesting. Panitzke, for example, no longer makes any secret of his wife's bastard child, who has become more successful than either of her children by him. Nor do people at the firm hide their scars from each other, neither the physical nor the mental. The scar on Kastner's arm where he once ran his fist through the glass door to the courtyard, the scars on Marisa's wrists from her suicide attempt and the scars on Ruschigk's neck where he husband once stabbed her, are all on display. Ruschigk even prefers scooped necklines to a style that would cover them. Emotional scars are revealed in the whispered stories that make the rounds through the company, enjoining sympathy in their wake.

The fatherlessness and homelessness Lifton associates with a fragmented world are both present in this novel, the former to the greater degree. Rovo is an orphan, as near as one can tell. No mention is ever made of his family at any time. He rents a room from Frau Singer, a lonely, older woman who treats him like a relative, and toward whom the youth feels some limited affection. Near the end of the novel, he is also described as "der Findling,"<sup>138</sup> which is enough to confirm what is already suspected. Hertha is also an orphan. WWII took her father, mother and sister; and Hertha, young, pregnant and vigorous, left her home behind her to strike out in the world and forage for herself and the son she would bear. In a certain sense, Goldie is himself an orphan. He has no father

both in the active sense and also in a biological sense, as it is impossible to know which of the Russian soldiers' violations of Hertha resulted in her pregnancy. Hertha herself denies him a mother, pretending instead to be his sister, a disguise she may have worn from the time he was weaned. Rieseberg is fatherless thanks to WWII, motherless by her own choice, with the result that she, too, is an orphan in an active sense. Even the Young Boss, adopted both legally and in the heart by the Old Boss, is very likely an orphan. His mother died several years ago in a mental institution and his biological father has long since disappeared. Because of his close relationship with his adopted father, however, it is likely he does not view himself in this light.

With the exception of the bosses, senior and junior, and possibly also of Panitzke, family does not appear to play a positive role in the lives of these characters, and is of so little consequence as to be rarely mentioned. Ruschigk's jealous, possessive husband beats her regularly and eventually stabs her with a knife, yet she does not leave him. The others seems to have no significant home life, which the narrator explains as follows:

Man sieht, was spät am Abend und am Wochenende sich zuhaus ereignet, doch eher als Marginalie, als unwesentliches Nachspiel an; zu tief, zu fest ist jeder einzelne in das Leben des Geschäfts verwachsen, in die Beziehungen zu den Kollegen, so vielfach dahinein verschlungen, als daß ihm noch Luft bliebe für das Private, als daß er da noch groß investieren könnte<sup>139</sup>. (77)

Although none of the scholars referenced name this phenomena as either a condition of or a reaction to the brokenness of the modern world, recent works of the popular media recognize the connection. The trade paperback *Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* by Arlie Russell Hochschild, has experienced brisk sales, an indication of the extent to which the condition described resonates with the general

populace. What work provides for these characters, what home life often fails to provide in the late twentieth century, is community.

The rise of science detailed by Morgan and referred to by Brown and Greenberg, as well as the “specialism” Morgan describes, have contributed to this state of affairs, as has the shift from rural societies to urban enclaves. The bulk of one’s productive time is spent at work, where one also shares with others in pursuit of a common goal, even if it isn’t a goal of one’s own choosing. In addition, expectations are usually clear and small rewards are frequent. The home, like the seemingly chaotic, information-charged world at large, is beset with instability, discord, disconnection.

Inside the workplace, things seem to change more slowly, at a pace that allows assimilation of the changes. Rovo notices this early in his apprenticeship: “Was sich verändert, liegt außerhalb, ja, um ihn herum verändert es sich”<sup>140</sup> (14). This impression remains despite Rovo’s own continuing experiences and is clearly the perspective of the many individuals whose voices he channels as narrator-medium: “Was ist eigentlich los in unserer Welt, in der alles, was für uns Bedeutung hat, immer gewöhnlicher wird, in der die Liebe, die Arbeit, das Essen sogar, immer unzusammenhängender und gröber werden, immer eiliger und unnatürlicher, immer fremder, brutaler, unmenschlicher ...”<sup>141</sup> (152). Everything around them is more hurried, the pace of change ever-increasing. Nature is lost, family either non-existent or threatening, the media a constant blitz, language suspect.

Wishing, therefore, perhaps without knowing it, for wholeness, actively seeking some form of connection with others, the co-workers in this unnamed business, a subsidiary of Riva, Incorporated, make an attempt at constructing community out of the elements at hand. It is unconsciously an attempt at wholeness, and by some measures a successful step on the journey, although not one that Walter Thiessen would likely affirm as such.

This community of co-workers is not precisely built on friendship. Their hesitation to use the word indicates a wariness, possibly a suspicion of at least certain aspects of language, much as described by George W. Morgan and Dennis Brown. Most of these people are surely only too familiar with the way the National Socialists manipulated their language. An undercurrent of general distrust is one of the novel's *leitmotifs*, actively engaged where the concept of friendship is concerned. Abromeit is at the core of it, Abromeit, who had nothing but cuffs and curses for the new apprentice at first, but who several months later “würdigt ihn seiner geheimsten Gedanken, legt sein Innerstes bloß, ein Mensch dem anderen, ein Freund dem anderen, wie man's nimmt”<sup>142</sup> (52). Abromeit is not the only member of the crew to share confidences with the apprentice, to which the stories Rovo gathers attest. Nor is the extension of some form of trust always limited exclusively to those who work there. The occasional client, we're told, now and then becomes “beinahe so etwas wie ein Freund”<sup>143</sup> (127).

Despite their distrust of the word, there is a recognition that what the word once stood for is something they need and want. But in today's world it is too much to hope for many such relationships. The Young Boss guardedly admits that “Ja, einen Vertrauten sollte er haben; einen einzigen Freund braucht jeder Mensch ...”<sup>144</sup> (147). They know stories of how it used to be, when friendship meant being willing to share everything with another person. But that time was no Golden Age, it was an anomaly, something that “nur im Krieg und kurz danach noch möglich war und dann nie mehr ...”<sup>145</sup> (86). So while it is true that Abromeit gradually eases Ellinor Bublitz off drugs, and then off the alcohol he used as a tool to get her to give up the drugs, and although Panitzke defends Rieseberg from the cutting judgments an encounter with her mother and sister would have brought, to call the relationships built ‘friendships’ would be a mistake.

It is a *Gesellschaft*,<sup>146</sup> a *Gemeinschaft*,<sup>147</sup> and a refuge they build, and it is shot through with religious imagery. Like Elizabeth Rieseberg, all of the employees may wonder if they are themselves “das letzte blühende Gewächs in einer Wüste, die letzte Rose sozusagen, in der entmenschten, abgestorbenen Natur? In einer öden, erkalteten Landschaft?”<sup>148</sup> (37). True to the model Thiessen proposes, these people have either left their families, or have been separated from this form of community in other ways, and have wandered individually into the wilderness of the modern world. Their leaving could be considered a calling out of bondage, out of the bondage of the wounds and the destruction of war. They came as individuals, not as a group, and some of them, following WWII, did not have any communities left to come from, so they came as fragmented individuals. Rather than an encounter with God, what they find in the wilderness are remnants of God and each other. Unclear as to how to leave the wilderness, and unconvinced that they would find anything worth becoming a member of if they should, this group elects to remain where they are, wandering, unfulfilled, but as a cohesive group bound to each other by choice and circumstance.

It is in the company of these people, at work, where Rovo experiences moments of true contentment. “Denn gibt es nicht die wunderbarsten Stunden? Wenn Rovo am Abend bei den anderen ist, im großen Büro, ... wenn sie kleine warme Räume um sich schaffen, wie Frühlingsblumen unter dem Schnee ...”<sup>149</sup> (16). All of them feel a part of something beyond themselves, something they have created, where they are accepted, recognized, responded to, and in a sense, liberated. Freed from solitude and the fear of judgment by others, they are also set free to care, and assured that their caring will not be rejected. In this sense, this work-group fulfills several of Thiessen’s conditions for community. Strangers are welcomed, as well, further establishing the validity of the designation. The outsider is admitted in the form of the new apprentice, the new employee, the temporary

worker. Marisa was once such an outsider, as were Rovo and Goldie. They are among the newer members of this circle.

The physical size and materials of the company's building are reassuring in their bulk. "Hier ist fester Grund. Niemand kann fallen. Das Geschäft ist die Hülle, die Fruchtblase, der sichere Hort. Und mag es auch inwendig knirschen und reiben, nach außen sind sie ein fester Körper, gegen alle Anfechtung gepanzert, ein einziger unangreifbarer Leib"<sup>150</sup> (12). Its economic clout is also reassuring, although the firm has not always maintained its position honestly. Still, to those who work there, it is "die vielen Tausch- und Täuschungsmanöver, die aber das Geschäft am Ende so stabil und krisensicher, die es groß und schließlich unumstößlich machten"<sup>151</sup> (35-36). After two world wars, in the face of a disjoint, rushing, seemingly senseless world, they welcome stability in whatever form they find it, even be it illusory.

Rovo does not always find reassurance either in the physical or social aspects of the company. When he first begins his apprenticeship, he feels lost, confused, unwelcome, threatened, overwhelmed: Subconsciously, he experiences entry into a wilderness. Like each of his co-workers before him, he enters it alone. He begins in the basement, the damp, dank, musty cellar of the company, with only Abromeit, seemingly brutal, for company. Soon, Rovo finds any excuse he can to run up the stairs into the office to be among others. Gradually, the unique symbol system of the business becomes understandable, then enmeshes itself within, and Rovo has begun the process of joining this fellowship.

Carl Vaught describes the quest for wholeness as involving art, religion, philosophy and experience. Art is present as narrative prose, at the macro level, the novel itself, and in the individual stories as refracted through Rovo at the micro level. Clearly, experience is an ingredient. Religion, as we shall soon see, is also very much a part of this

environment. But what of philosophy? In attempting to clarify the place of philosophy as a component, Vaught writes, “[W]holeness is not to be found in the theoretical resolution of philosophical problems, but at the point where the characters of a dialogue meet and in the dialogic interaction among alternative philosophical perspectives” (12). To claim that the characters in Reinshagen’s novel engage in “dialogic interaction among alternative philosophical perspectives” would be stretching the bounds of credibility. Dialogue itself, however, is present and active in the interactions between figures, and on a frequent basis. Rovo is not generally one of the participants in dialogue. He overhears and absorbs what he can of those he encounters, in, between and around the oral histories he is also preserving. The presence of dialogue and the absence of philosophy serves to underline my position that community may be achieved here, but, as community is one of several conditions necessary for wholeness, the latter is at best approached, never reached.

In addition to the new symbol system each employee gradually internalizes during their early years with the company, all of them carry with them at least the remainders, the fragments, of Christian symbology. There are over one hundred direct references or clear allusions to Christian thought and ritual in the novel, from Rovinato’s early longing to pull the building down around him much as Samson destroyed the great house of the Philistines, to comparing that which speaks through Rovo to the burning bush through which God spoke with Moses. There is no evidence that theirs is an active faith, nor that it is at any time directly connected with an experience of God. What remains of the religion are the symbols, the talismans, the vocabulary. God, the devil, angels, heaven, faith, salvation, holiness, the soul, confession, eternity, grace, judgment day, the cross, martyrs, saints all retain distant, indistinct symbolic meanings that the co-workers hold vaguely in common.

Therefore, they equate the security and freedom they feel in particular places in the building with Paradise. “Oh ja, das Lager, die Versandabteilung und der Wareneingang sind das Paradies”<sup>152</sup> (65). Thus, Rovo describes his six-month assignment in the warehouse as a detail “im Garten Eden ...”<sup>153</sup> (67). The warehouse is Paradise in part because it is the area where all secrets are safe, but also because it is here that “[e]s herrscht eine stillverborgene Gerechtigkeit, von jedem unbestritten angenommen, da sie eine organisch gewachsene ist, nicht von oben diktiert, nicht zur hohlen Form erstarrt, sondern täglich änderbar, im Sinne der sich ständig wandelnden Bedürfnisse”<sup>154</sup> (67). Justice, which, in the world at large, seems like nothing more than a dream built on old legends, is actually practiced in the warehouse, and it is a form of justice that seems to retain some connection to nature. This naturalness does not prevent it from being able to deal with the continuous change affecting the modern world, even at the delimited rate present within the company. But, if it were not for the warehouse, “wo sollten die Trostbedürftigen hin, alles Beladenen, alles Bedrängte, wo fände es in seiner Mühsal Ruhe?”<sup>155</sup> (67). Saints Peukert, Neske and Morenke control the gates to this Paradise and welcome all the tired and heavy-laden entry into their kingdom. Management keep out.

From this beginning, the entire company then gradually takes on stray remainders of religious symbolism. When the company is sold to the larger Riva, Inc. firm, no one thinks to inform the apprentice immediately, “daß der Leib und das Blut unseres Geschäfts, symbolisiert durch ein paar weiße Aktenblätter, von einem anderen größeren Leib verschlungen worden waren”<sup>156</sup> (90). The body and the blood are today, to these employees, symbolized not by bread and wine, but by documents that pass between the priests of business, and which the acolytes never touch.

That beyond “the body” there is now a larger body, also takes on religion overtones in the chapter “Das Universum.”<sup>157</sup> The Young Boss makes a point of taking each

apprentice that passes through the firm with him on one of his trips to visit the headquarters of the new parent company. Rovo is the first apprentice in whom this produces the desired effect, namely, the youth is astonished at the size and might of the business. At one point, while the Young Boss meets privately with senior executives “im Allerheiligsten”<sup>158</sup> (144), Rovo, waiting in the huge, open, general office of the company, begins to daydream. The guided tour through these facilities has seemed like a *deja-vu* experience to the young apprentice, and suddenly, memories of a picture he’d seen in one of Neske’s old scientific magazines connect with the company. It was of a painting from the Middle Ages, a time saturated in Christian symbolism, infused with spiritual fears and otherworldly beliefs. In the picture:

Da bricht ein kleiner Mensch, die Hände voraus, durch das Himmelsgewölbe, aus seiner Welt mit Sonne, Mond und Sternen in die nächste; wie ein Küken bricht er durch die Schale unserer Welt hindurch, und was muß er sehn? Noch einmal eine Welt mit nochmal einer Sonne, Mond und Sternen, die aber größer als die unsere ist, und dahinter nochmal eine größere Welt, und nochmal eine, und dahinter ... [ellipsis the author’s]<sup>159</sup> (143).

This Medieval painting of heaven is very similar to the modern corporate structure in which Rovo operates. Above his own company, which seems large enough to him, is an even larger company, and beyond them, yet another, and eventually, given years of mergers and buyouts, perhaps an endless chain of ever larger businesses, a corporate heaven stretching into eternity.

At the center of these expanding heavens, within the company where they work, where Paradise is located in a warehouse staffed by saints, and the holy sacraments are locked in a safe, one employee performs a crucial, thankless function. It is Elizabeth Rieseberg, one of the firm’s longest-term employees. “Ja, sie muß alles aufholen. Sie hält

das moralische Weltgleichgewicht. Und je unehrlicher die anderen sind, desto ehrlicher muß sie sein. Je tiefer sich die Schale der Unmoral senkt, desto schwerer muß sie auf der anderen Seite werden”<sup>160</sup> (36-37). Her job is a variation of the one performed by Hernández’s Guardian of the Cave. Where the Guardian of the Cave does all that is left undone by others, Elizabeth Rieseberg must counterbalance what others do. If some employees round their time up, in order to sneak a few extra Deutsch Marks into their paychecks, she must round hers down to counterbalance this small fraud. She will forego benefits due herself in order to bring the firm’s moral scales back to a position of balance.

Viewed in a certain light, management also offers a sort of equilibrium, not, however, on the side of morality. Yes, their tricks sometimes occupy the other tray of Rieseberg’s scale, but, in daily terms, it is the three managers as “other” who provide the opposition that assists the employees to coalesce. The Old Boss, the Young Boss and Kastner (who is least liked of the three) make the demands and determine the working “climate,” creating the need for secret hiding places and refuges that can be met from within. It would be an overstatement to imply they are associated here with the devil. They are the necessary negative polarity, and yet another bonding element. The presence of management creates the conditions for a secret world shared by the employees, all of whom were selected — hired — by the managers. Bosses senior and junior are portrayed sympathetically, an indication that these co-workers hold them in some affection.

When all of these factors are examined together, one understands why the “Medium” may state that inside the company it is as if there were a God: “Als ob sich alles ausgleichen müßte; als ob da oben einer säße, der darüber wacht, daß jeder sein Teil, sein Fett wegbekommt”<sup>161</sup> (86).

Thus, against the background of the remainders of a Christian symbol system; in the presence of the new symbols of the business world; in the wilderness within that is

often the product of modern, Western, urban life; a community forms. *Leitmotifs* of linking and binding run throughout the novel from beginning to end. The word “zusammen” [together] appears in nearly every imaginable compound form: “zusammenbinden,” “zusammenfinden,” “zusammenfügen,” “zusammenhalten,” “zusammenhängen,” “zusammenpreßen,” “zusammensammeln,” “zusammensetzen,” “zusammentun”<sup>162</sup> etc. Gathering, collecting, assembling and joining also figure strongly. The characters are collected together by a common environment, gathered in this place, where they further join themselves to each other in community by which they will survive the vagaries of the business world, and find shelter from the fractured universe outside.

They seek survival, not wholeness. It is a goal proportionate to their experience. Survival is a secondary *leitmotif* of the novel, and this theme appears in several forms. There is the desire to just get through the day, to outlast the customer of the moment, to come through a particular task, to withstand the latest onslaught. They frequently celebrate their continued joint survival with a night of drinking in Helma Habenicht’s pub across the way. Inside the tavern, their medium-sized enclave opens slightly to embrace several more, regulars like themselves, but some of whom are strangers to the firm. Whether at work or together after work, there is a sense of unity, of oneness, “[A]ls ob,” Rovo narrates, “es Einzelschicksale bei uns nicht gäbe, als ob sie alle gleich unweigerlich Geschäftsschicksale würden, so wie denn auch die Zeichen, die sich auf ein Geschehnis beziehen, fast immer kollektive sind”<sup>163</sup> (162-63).

Does this collective comprise true community under the guidelines Walter Thiessen sets out? There are a number of reasons for believing it does. First, persons within the group are able to differentiate, yet remain committed to the larger entity, which has its own distinct identity. Each of the characters is uniquely identifiable. With the exception of Rovo, particularity is maintained despite the assumption of a corporate identity.

Second, the group offers interpersonal security and provides a setting in which vocation is exercised in two of the three forms Thiessen outlines. “Vocation” and “profession” are not identical, and in this setting the former does not necessarily refer to performing those tasks that contribute to furthering the employer’s goals. Rather, they are each of them involved in fulfilling the needs of the members, a setting in which vocation is corporate, in the sense that all are engaged in this aspect of it. This comes not at the calling of God, however, as Thiessen insists true vocation must. In Rovo’s case specifically, vocation is provoked by the call of Abromeit, who, profoundly drunk and shortly before his death, gestures first to the apprentice before pointing to an empty corner and roaring, “DA STEHT ABROMEIT”<sup>164</sup> (167).

Third, the group does provide relative temporal stability due to a given structure, namely, that of the corporate entity. The company may not exist forever, but, given that it was founded before WWI and has endured despite both war and enormous change, it gives a feeling of permanence to the employees. The security they enjoy allows the group to remain open to accepting new members, both from the fringes and from within the company.

In addition, the group does, indeed, provide its members with a symbol system, namely, that relating to business. However, this new form of symbology is not narrative in character, as Thiessen insists it must be in order to serve as a step toward wholeness. The new narrative that emerges from their joint association is not tied to this symbol system, and the old symbol system of Christianity, which originally was intrinsically connected with an interwoven collection of narratives, is now fragmented. And none of these systems can be said to either embody or point to truth.

Finally, rituals and traditions have evolved over the years, but most are unconnected with either system of symbols. Tweaking, coffee breaks, hiding objects,

teasing, warehouse visits and actions associated with the approach of the end of the business day have all taken on the cast of ritual. Dealing with customers has its own series of rituals, and is an example of traditions that spring directly from the business aspect of their environment.

This compassionate association of co-workers has enough of the hallmarks of true community to warrant the designation. What is lacking are many of the aspects of community that contribute to wholeness. Central here is the absence of an encounter with God. We have established that the pattern of being called out of bondage into the wilderness is present, but because there is no deep contact with the divine, the community that is formed is not covenantal, lacks an integrating center, and fails to reemerge from the wilderness. That Rovo becomes the center of this formation is not disputed, and it is reasonable to say that the various stories are integrated inside him, in the sense of being blended together into a corporate narrative. But this is the service of a medium, not of a force that stands immeasurably above and beyond the body of individuals as the element that binds them together.

At one point, Rovo “denkt, er ist eine Stadt, und alles rauscht und klingt durch ihn hindurch ...”<sup>165</sup> (49). There are overtones here of Falk’s fleeting sensation near the end of *Am großen Stern*: “Momentlang ist ihm, als bildete er das Zentrum der Stadt, genau die Mitte zwischen Ost und West, und er müßte die Hälften zusammenhalten ...”<sup>166</sup> (274). But the images are not the same. Falk sees himself more as the hinge that fastens a door to a wall or the bridge between two sides, straining to keep them from breaking apart. Although the illustration puts him in the center in the way that a fulcrum is the center point between two ends in balance, it is not a struggle for equilibrium he describes, but rather, the battle to hold elements together that are, naturally, perhaps, moving toward separation.

Rovo, in contrast, is neither a point of balance nor a connecting clasp, but rather, the kernel at the center of a Medieval heavens-globe, as becomes more transparent near the novel's end: "[E]r fühlt die Körper um sich kreisen, zur Mitte wandern und auseinanderstreben, auftauchen, erlöschen wie riesige Welten; ja riesig groß ist alles geworden um ihn, und er mittendrin, als sei er der Kern ..."167 (182). Rather than fostering unity within the self, for Rovo, becoming part of this community has resulted in a dissolution of the self. Thiessen warns of the possibility when he writes: "It is unlikely, however, that a person becomes individuated by joining any one community. In fact, in joining a new community, a person may even become less individuated; it may be a regressive experience" (63-64). Rovo gains security and acceptance — he even becomes necessary — when he integrates himself into the group. But he also experiences decreasing individuation to the point of a dissolution of the self, something none of the other characters suffer. As Jutta Kiencke-Wagner points out, this is the price for serving as medium.

Rovinato is not part of other true communities that might serve to anchor him, nor does the one true community into which he is accepted have a living contact with the divine, an integrating center. Thiessen contends that, "Lacking such an integrating center, the community is as idolatrous and fragmented as the individual self and will provide no unity for the self" (41-42). He used the word "idolatrous" here in the sense of "interpersonal patterns from which we demand a security and purpose they can never satisfy" (37). The human cannot substitute for the divine. Both are necessary ingredients of wholeness, a condition, even the conception of which eludes the youth.

If Rovo can be said to have — unconsciously — begun a quest for wholeness by moving into the wilderness from the bondage of the modern world, then Thiessen's statement that "one of the ways in which this journey is thrown off course is by an

ultimate, centering attachment to something less than God, something finite” (80) is applicable here. Rovo becomes the center of an attachment of a group of people to each other, the finite quality of which is lessened by his act of following a predecessor, whose role he expands by serving as a receptacle for their stories. The journey here stops at the point of community, perhaps because the group has settled for a substitute center in Rovo.

Exemplifying neither Greenberg’s “atomistic fragmentation,” which corresponds closely with one of Thiessen’s definitions of the condition as “denial of any integrating attachment” (82), nor with his concept of “segmentary fragmentation,” which is similar to Thiessen’s view of the state as “polytheistic” (82), Rovo is less “pulled apart” than he is “emptied out.” In order to become the receptacle for the company’s stories, that which was once inside the “medium” has to be flushed out, the confusion replaced with a prepared space. Walter Thiessen writes that, “[h]ealing of soul and community go hand in hand. A disordered and fragmented society cannot be healed in the individual psyche” (123). *Rovinato* does not contradict this statement. It is not healing, but cohesion that develops, a cleaving together permitted by the existence of a “medium.”

Jutta Kiencke-Wagner maintains that Rovo is driven into this position by dreams and stories that create pictures which bombard his imagination. “Zu sehr ufern seine Phantasien aus, werden sie von dem, was seine Kollegen leben, gefangen genommen, als daß er sich auch nur für die kurze Zeit der Prüfung auf sich selbst konzentrieren könnte”<sup>168</sup> (275). Although a valid interpretation from one perspective, it is also legitimate from another to note that human attachment needs, more than the imagination, drive Rovo’s actions during the exam. The apprentice is fine at the beginning of the examination period. He is calm and prepared. The group of apprentices are tested in alphabetical order by last name, and Rovo’s wait is therefore a long one. It is only as the period of inactivity drags on to overlap with Abromeit’s funeral that a conflict ensues. Had he been allowed to take

the exam before the hour of these funerary services, it may have gone smoothly, resulting in a passing grade and a position as salesman within the company.

But the modern world does not stop for death. The end of life, as well as its beginning are disparate pieces, given no particular value in corporate society. The firm sends three official representatives to the funeral, a social showing, which, although their graveside presence may be meaningful to them as individuals, is a mere formality to the corporation. The discordant, broken, disjunct greater world beyond breaks into the niche Rovo has found at last amidst his co-workers. As the funeral begins, Rovo's mind is beset by memories, all of which are mysteriously linked by Abromeit's drunken prophecy, which Rovo's experiences, "wie ein Psalm, was alles vereinigt"<sup>169</sup> (174). Subconsciously, Rovo recognizes how vital this community is to his survival as a human being, and flees the examination room over the heads of the examiners, rushing to the cemetery.

He arrives too late, of course, and, in this seemingly boundless city of the dead, without the presence of his co-workers, it appears to Rovo, "als liefe er im Kreis wie in der Wüste ..." <sup>170</sup> (175). Without the community around him, the youth is suddenly aware of his location. The circles which are present as the primary image of a very minor geometric *leitmotif* Reinshagen weaves through this work, suddenly take on an overtone of futility, rather than cohesion. The circle traditionally represents eternity, that which is unending, and is mainly associated in the story with the linking of these co-workers to each other via their stories. But if their alliance, lacking an integrating center in the form of the divine, is fated to remain forever in the wilderness, to be stopped in their journey toward wholeness, the circle as a symbol of futility is fitting for the whole as well as for this scene.

Rovinato chooses commonality over individuality, but he is the only member of the group to be so dissolved. For the remainder, the healthy tensions between the corporate and the individual of which Thiessen speaks remain. Perhaps, lacking an encounter with

the eternal, Rovo becomes a human sacrifice in modern terms, losing not his life, but having the disparate elements that might have composed selfhood swept away.

When the novel is examined in light of Carl Vaught's related understanding of wholeness, much of what has been said about the co-workers' community as viable stands. These characters do, indeed, begin from the condition of fragmentation, "with alienation and with the longing for unity that all of us share" (47). "[F]ragmentation is also understood as a break with the past ..." (112), which for these figures was begun by WWI and completed with WWII. Every one of them is connected with this second world war, but not with their history before these wars. All that remains of this earlier time are fragments of beliefs and traditions.

Their journey also begins with the telling of stories, specifically, with the story of Rovo's dream. Vaught stresses that art, religion, philosophy and experience are all necessary for wholeness to result. "[T]he telling of stories stands at the beginning of the quest for wholeness, and ... reflection stands at the end ..." (16), he writes. But at the end of *Rovinato* there are — more stories. Reflection — philosophy — plays no part in the journey for these figures.

This is a critical omission, as important in its magnitude as the absence of individual experience with the ultimate. "[R]eflection itself is an integral part of the human journey" (94), Vaught insists with reason, and the lack of it is another confirmation that this setting offers no portrait of wholeness. The stories told emerge from memory, recount experience and are acted upon by imagination. But the characters involved do not reflect, neither upon the stories that are told, nor upon their present experience.

The absence of philosophy is compounded by the failure to experience a deep spiritual connection with the ultimate. There is no face to face encounter with God because the quest is stymied after it's begun. Rather than a continuous journey, *Rovinato* portrays

a beginning and the beginnings of a middle, followed by a full stop. There is no return, no retreat. That which was begun is not undone, but travel does not resume, either. There is no direct meeting with “the sustaining ground of our existence” (6).

From Carl Vaught’s perspective, “[T]he quest for wholeness moves in two directions; not only driving us toward the future, but also requiring us to make contact with the past ...” (4). Obviously, contact with the past is abundant and appropriate. The missing element is the future. Despite the secondary *leitmotif* of time, it’s the present that forms the second dimension here, which is limiting in terms of wholeness. The approximately half dozen references to the future are far outweighed by those to “heute”<sup>171</sup> and “die Gegenwart.”<sup>172</sup> The characters march tightly in place as a form of clutching at security. When there is no drive toward the future, however, there is insufficient balance to the past, and movement is found only in one direction.

Rovo seems stymied in his quest, as do a number of the characters, because he has no origins to either turn from or return to. He is apparently an orphan, who seems never to have been emotionally adopted until he becomes part of this group. He begins as a vagueness and ends as a conduit. Beginning from a point of disconnection, it’s no wonder that Rovo is vulnerable to losing his individuality. His origins are not so much threatening as they are indistinct. Too young to have experienced the war, he is nevertheless a product of its historical disconnect, and may even have the war to thank for his orphaned status.

Vaught believes that we are lead back to “the place where we began ... not primarily to recover our finite origins, but to confront our infinite ground” (7). Rovo, as well as many of the others, having no place to which he can return, lacks the footing for an encounter with God in this form. He can neither move from fragmentation to re-inclusion in the family, even when “family” is broadly viewed to embrace any form of inclusive, enduring social group; nor is he able to experience God and move into the future,

empowered to generate new community. Among these co-workers, Rovo receives his first adoption. He moves from fragmentation to initial inclusion in a family of sorts. Here, he discovers Thiessen's interpersonal security, which is a mark of wholeness, but does not experience Vaught's corresponding finite self-acceptance. Nor does Rovo reach a state of fulfillment. He does, however, sustain a relationship of unity, which is a crucial attribute of wholeness from Vaught's perspective. The other members of the group likewise experience interpersonal security and unity, and, one could argue, with varying degrees of self-acceptance, but without the condition of fulfillment.

These characters avoid both of what Vaught outlines as the two most frequent enemies met along the route to wholeness, namely, the temptation to act rather than speak, and the error of demanding complete comprehension. There are exceptions to this statement, in that Ruschigk, back at work after her husband stabbed her in the neck, does not speak of the incident while displaying her scars. This is an anomaly in her behavior, however, and isn't repeated. The apprentice forms the other exception, in that once appointed shipper, he ceases to speak, turning to communication of a different sort. This is another sign that Rovo's wholeness journey has come to a halt. As Vaught points out, "[D]arkness ... cannot be overcome by the companionship of a larger community committed to a common venture" (33). The darkness he refers to here are the disquieting, discordant elements that produce feelings of fragmentation. Community alone is insufficient to overcome the modern condition. It is but one element of several necessary for wholeness.

And where some seekers lose their way on a side path seeking total understanding of the world in its temporal and eternal dimensions, because the philosophical element is entirely absent, this provides no temptation to the figures presented. Their most nearly-

conscious goal is survival, not wholeness, and complete comprehension is neither necessary nor of value within these perimeters.

*Rovinato oder die Seele des Geschäfts* in many ways seems like a preliminary study for Gerlind Reinshagen's later novels. Most of the *leitmotifs* are repeated in the novels that follow, and the themes reappear as well. In addition, she would specifically reiterate the question "Wer spricht?" in reference to narration in the 1993 novel *Jäger am Rand der Nacht*, using the question as the title for three separate short chapters, in the second of which one finds the following: "Wer spricht? Bin ich es? Ein anderer? Spricht einer durch mich? Wer redet durch wen? ... Horch! Alle sprechen. Du hörst uns! Solange du lebst, sind wir in deinem Kopf"<sup>173</sup> (126). In the subsequent novel, the reader, not a character, as become the "medium" through which stories flow.

She would never again use this form of narration, however. In the novels that follow, Reinshagen persists in exploring different perspectives and differing voices, but in ways that more clearly define the source. The resulting fragmentation of the narrative is less confusing, the difference being the size of the pieces. In *Rovinato*, the reader is given narrative splinters to work with: In *Jäger*, s/he is given shards.

Reinshagen has also never again allowed so much hope to be present in her fictional worlds. As in *Am großen Stern*, her subsequent novels paint a bleak picture of the modern condition in the urban, Western world. The scene is one of alienation, discord, disjunction, incompleteness, disconnection, deterioration and irreconcilability. Only in *Rovinato* does she present a group of figures as involved in approaching wholeness, a goal that is not reached, but with the undeniable result that what has occurred is, at least, an attempt.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1926, Ostpreußen was part of Germany. Today, it is located in Poland.

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<sup>2</sup> *Twelve Nights*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Runaway Bride* or *The Transient Bride*. The adjective *flüchtig* has the following meanings in German: fugitive, runaway, absconding, transitory, passing, hasty, careless, cursory, flighty, fickle, fleeting.

<sup>4</sup> [P]rismatic narration.

<sup>5</sup> *Hunter on the Edge of Night* or *Hunter at the Edge of Night*.

<sup>6</sup> *At the Big Star*. [The Big Star is an important traffic circle in the city.]

<sup>7</sup> Cohn 14.

<sup>8</sup> Cohn 135.

<sup>9</sup> Such as “hab” rather than “habe” or “haben,” which could be translated as “ha” as opposed to “have.”

<sup>10</sup> Such as in using “sehn” for “sehen” [to see] or “gehn” for “gehen” [to go].

<sup>11</sup> As in the contraction “wenn’s” for “wenn es” [if it].

<sup>12</sup> [R]ambles from one thing to another.

<sup>13</sup> [P]ut a good face on it.

<sup>14</sup> Patience is bitter, but the fruit is sweet! You must finish what you start! Don’t put off until tomorrow ... Today I bake, tomorrow I brew ...

<sup>15</sup> If one sought a symbol for the condition of the world, Falk had thought, one would only need to display an unretouched photo of these groceries, an image of stinking, rotted excess.

<sup>16</sup> “Zersetzen” = “to decompose,” “to disintegrate.” “Verderben” = “to spoil,” “to rot,” “to deteriorate.” “Vermodern” = “to molder,” “to decay,” “to rot.” “Verrotten” = “to rot,” “to corrupt.”

<sup>17</sup> “Vergeuden” = “to waste,” “to squander,” “to dissipate.” “Verschleudern” = “to dissipate,” “to waste.” “Vernachlässigen” = “to neglect.” “Verwüsten” = “to lay waste,” “to devastate,” “to ravage.”

<sup>18</sup> A Percy.

<sup>19</sup> The Mother.

<sup>20</sup> The young mother of children.

<sup>21</sup> The Old One.

<sup>22</sup> The Already Ugly One.

<sup>23</sup> The Real One, the Painter-Father.

<sup>24</sup> The Orthopedic Surgeon.

<sup>25</sup> The Stepfather.

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- 26 The Foreign Father. Note: “fremd” can also mean “strange,” “alien,” “unknown,” “outside” or “unfamiliar.”
- 27 The Child.
- 28 It.
- 29 His Child.
- 30 His Daughter.
- 31 The Little Gaunt One.
- 32 The Carpenter.
- 33 To creep, to crawl, to slink, to prowl.
- 34 To creep, to crawl.
- 35 To perch, to squat.
- 36 Pawing, fumbling, groping.
- 37 Why do I see all of us ... retract our heads from every rival?
- 38 Further along on his belly.
- 39 [T]he stamping and moaning of the rolling [the verb also means “wallowing”], only gradually tiring sea.
- 40 Tracks, traces.
- 41 He, Falk, had checked Bronja, ensnared [or captured] her.
- 42 Falk doesn’t answer.
- 43 [D]oesn’t venture to ask.
- 44 Falk doesn’t find the word.
- 45 [H]e lets her go. He doesn’t follow her.
- 46 [I]t’s too late as always, every time.
- 47 Now a troop of young saleswomen, who just stuck their heads together in the most rigorous concentration in order to beat back annoying customers, become aware of them.
- 48 In order to fight the Old Woman, in order to hold his ground or parry her assault, requires utmost mental presence.
- 49 [A] battle is taking place here, a silent, breathless struggle, as if, as in real battles, nothing less than existence itself were at stake.
- 50 “Angriffen” = “assaults” or “attacks.” “Widerstand” = “resistance.” “Kämpfen und Siegen” = “fighting and conquering.” “Niederlagen” = “defeats.” “Trotzmanöver” = “counter maneuvers.”
- 51 [A]nd already concoct a campaign plan.

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- 52 [T]hat resistance is futile. He doesn't own any weapons.
- 53 [S]he'll be buried quickly ... Her son will never visit her grave.
- 54 Blood, blood again, already.
- 55 Leaping to his death.
- 56 "Todesmitleid" = "sympathy with death." "Tödlich Leidenschaften" = "deadly passions." "Todesängste" = "being scared to death." "Todmüde" = "dead tired."
- 57 Friends constrict, bind.
- 58 [S]its still, explains nothing, keeps quiet, waits ...
- 59 Talking leads to nothing but bad luck.
- 60 [O]ne needn't talk.
- 61 This woman won't keep her distance. ... [E]verything wants body- and soul-contact, presses you hard, oh, the whole world — with the only exception of the animals in the forest anymore — gets too close!
- 62 He knows his friend. They are so closely tied together as one can only be in an apartment house in this city, that is, stronger than in a normal friendship relationship.
- 63 Taufik, who is something like a friend.
- 64 And no one should have rung the bell: He has never missed anybody.
- 65 [A]nd finally, to tow on homewards, back to the quiet of the empty apartment, to the old familiar, wonderful, life-saving seclusion. [Note: the word "Einsamkeit" can also be translated as "loneliness," "lonesomeness," "solitude" or "isolation."]
- 66 Falk doesn't talk with anyone.
- 67 He alone and the others; the one, the many, brought together by Matti, forced together into a society, a community of the like-minded who perched in pubs for days and nights, in half-empty rooms, on tables in the large auditorium — and how gladly he'd mixed among them, dove in and dove under and swam with the many.
- 68 He ... undertakes from here on out to do nothing more apart from her, to ask her advice on decisions.
- 69 They have their profession, their life, to each his own ....
- 70 [T]hey have never discussed marriage, to say nothing of offspring.
- 71 With this — as before — no thought that he wanted the girl as a lover. He has Karoline.
- 72 They play Family. As if they didn't need anyone but themselves ....
- 73 Her absence is as unbearable as her presence was unobtrusive. He misses her voice, her glances and her touches. And the patience to put up with him. Or: The cheerfulness with which she keeps her distance. He thinks he senses her more clearly now, stronger from a distance. As if he saw her.
- 74 There, where she is, he is also at home.

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- 75 Silence, Bronja, can also be a lie.
- 76 This should probably be “García,” but the accent never appears in the novel.
- 77 What ever the girl may have experienced, whether she was raised in misery, in poverty, in hunger, criminality even, or quietly, in the lee of events — he wants to know nothing of it. Nothing about the place where she lived, nothing about the domestic relationships. He wants to form his own idea of it.
- 78 Even if I didn’t invent/discover you, didn’t I think you out further? Didn’t you follow my conception, obediently and almost voluntarily? In this way, switching between firmness and flexibility, freedom and force, didn’t we bring you to your most beautiful form?
- 79 Hasn’t she become how he wanted her?
- 80 [F]ormed out of reality and conception, out of present, past and future thought together, the image of images: the child and the spirit of this child in one — Bronja on this night, exactly.
- 81 Every photo, every painting that one reduces, thinks Falk, gains definition.
- 82 Of course Falk knows that in the new stories — for centuries, at least, already — every sort of trouble/adversity begins with the reaching of the goal: The union just sealed below the ringing of church bells is threatened right on the next day. Evil spirits haunt the happy.
- 83 But do the new stories always have to be right? And the old ones always wrong? Couldn’t one err as much as the other?
- 84 [N]ever to break into her stories ....
- 85 He has experienced it in his own body: If one has enough patience to live within the fantasized world, sooner or later he will live there firmly/fixedly/tightly, the made up/invented figures will become friends (or foes as well), alien designs/plots will bind themselves to one’s own (or foil them); should he tell the tales out to the end.
- 86 What ball, what fountain!
- 87 [T]here was no queen there, either.
- 88 What fate, what Parzival!
- 89 What nonsense! The dream of a common end ... [in the sense of a joint death].
- 90 Building a [religious] sect of three.
- 91 ThankGod!
- 92 For example, using “ lieber Gott” (15, 163) [“good God”] and “weiss Gott” (168) [“God knows”] as interjections.
- 93 To hell. The literal translation would be “to the devil.”
- 94 In hell. A more literal translation would be “in the devil.”
- 95 Little angel.

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- 96 Penance before witnesses.
- 97 “Verbergen” = “to conceal” or “to hide.” “Verheimlichen” = “to hide,” “to conceal,” “to hush up” or “to hold back.” “Verstecken” = “to hide” or “to conceal.”
- 98 “Tüscheln” = “to whisper.” “Flüstern” = “to whisper” or “to speak under one’s breath.”
- 99 [H]is flight from West to East ....
- 100 Whoever wants to experience the desert, must experience dying. Death is part of it ....
- 101 She wants to lie beside him, she pushes herself near, she perches on his breast, on his head, he lies like before, shaken with fear, out of breath ... and once again, as before, he feels guilty.
- 102 No computer showed it to him; the diabolical symbiosis alone in which he had lived — and still lived — with his mother, from which she would never let him get free, has as its consequence, that he can calculate her [i.e. her movements and her emotions].
- 103 Every day the frantic car-chase, getting increasingly faster, astonished him, so close to his closed-off street, as if his house lay on an island and were at the same time wildly raged around and yet protected. During the night he sometimes imagines he lives in a castle surrounded by a moat, whose drawbridges are drawn up.
- 104 Indeed, there are a couple of cultivated fields and fallow land between them, but still one can never gaze into the distance. Barracks and tin sheds arrest it, or little huts or the facades of a half-finished industrial plant that are already crumbling again.
- 105 Nature is no longer in a position to strengthen a child. Not ours, anyway. Nature, the way it appears here, says Taufik, in this trampled, undermined, raped condition everywhere can only make her melancholy.
- 106 Possibly, he says, one will soon be forced to begin again from the beginning, to discover another form of medicine, a completely new one, commensurate to the changes in the air, the water and the earth.
- 107 Wants to go back to things and people ... back into life.
- 108 She has to get back to her homework, back into order and ... back to health.
- 109 Order is half of life.
- 110 In order to find clarity! And order! Air!
- 111 Novel of education.
- 112 *Rovinato or the Heart and Soul of the Company* (Rovinato is a very uncommon male proper name).
- 113 Kiencke-Wagner maintains the purpose here is an attempt to produce “eine Sprache des Unbewußten” (292) [“a language of the unconscious”].
- 114 [N]arrative kaleidoscope.
- 115 Reported speech is also know variously as “free, indirect speech,” “erlebte Rede” or “indirect interior narrated monologue,” according to Dorrit Cohn.

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- 116 They keep the beginning of the story as silent as the dead to you; he has to account for it himself, without testimony.
- 117 [S]ince he half lived and half read his life, he isn't certain: Did he go through the experiences or had they only been in a book.
- 118 [S]uch a dumb, inexperienced youngster.
- 119 [T]he little straw-head.
- 120 [T]he dawdler. ["Bummler" can also be translated as "idler," "loafer," "sluggard" or "slowpoke."]
- 121 [A] sleepwalker.
- 122 [O]ur dream-dancer.
- 123 [T]his ill-bred lout.
- 124 [W]hich voice had spoken through him.
- 125 Do the company's stories circle around in him?
- 126 Then who narrates here precisely what? Where does it come from? Who's speaking? How many voices have to unite before a thought, before a story comes into being?
- 127 Who, who is thinking whom ... or him, or me ... or what?
- 128 Then what happens to the story in the head? [Alternatively, "So what happens to the story in one's head?"]
- 129 [T]hat through and in Rovinato, life and the varied stories of his colleagues melt together into a "unitary body," which is the central theme of the novel.
- 130 The stories, in all their variation, round about the "medium" Rovinato, lead back to four fundamental themes: death, madness, love and dreams, long familiar thematic areas for Reinshagen.
- 131 [T]hat represents the most perfidious, most infamous that is able to be thought in the human mind, an instrument which, in cruel selection, would destroy only the sensing substance, while the senseless, the unknowing ... remains alive until the judgment day, when one can even speak of life here at all.
- 132 [T]he sense of nature is dead: There are no trees outside the windows here, no mountain ridges, neither natural nor artificial waters, not even clouds over the city any more.
- 133 [F]rom the haze of her stalls and fields into the landscape of dust, stocks, riveted windows ....
- 134 They stand there astonished — when was the last time you/one saw a frog at large?
- 135 It's said they're nearly extinct in these parts.
- 136 They break too easily in the meadows when the tractors roll over them, in the fields which are poisoned, in the water which contains too much nitrate, in a landscape that's hostile to them; everything that's pretty dies so fast.

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- 137 The only nature that Rovo sees when he runs errands through the firm, is the women's hair ....
- 138 [T]he foundling.
- 139 One sees what occurs in the evening and on the weekend rather as marginalia, as an inessential postlude; each one is rooted too deeply, too firmly in their professional lives, in their relationships with their colleagues, so widely devoured there for there to be air left over for the private/personal, for them to still be able to invest greatly there.
- 140 That which changes lies outside, yes, things change around him.
- 141 What's really up in our world, that everything that has meaning for us is becoming ever commoner, love, work, even food, ever more unconnected and coarser, ever swifter and more unnatural, ever stranger, more brutal, less human ....
- 142 [H]e deems him worthy of his most secret thoughts, lays his innards open, one human to another, one friend to another, as one might take it.
- 143 [A]lmost something like a friend.
- 144 Yes, he should have a confidant; every one needs one single friend ....
- 145 [W]as only still possible during the war and shortly thereafter, and then never again ....
- 146 [S]ociety.
- 147 [C]ommunity.
- 148 [T]he last blooming plant in the wilderness, the last rose, so to say, in the inhuman, withered nature? In a dreary, cooled landscape?
- 149 Then aren't there the most wonderful hours? When Rovo is with the others in the evening, in the big office ... when they create a little warm space around themselves, like spring flowers under the snow ... [Final ellipses the author's.]
- 150 Here is a house and a roof. Here is solid ground. No one can fall. The business is the hull, the seed, the safe retreat. And however it may also grind and grate inside, from outside it's a firm body, girded against all attacks, a singular, unassailable body.
- 151 [T]he many exchange and deceptions-maneuvers, but which make the business so stable and secure in times of crisis, which make it large and incontestable in the end.
- 152 Oh yes, the warehouse, the receiving department and the entryway are Paradise.
- 153 [I]n the Garden of Eden ...
- 154 Quiet, hidden justice rules here, unquestioningly accepted by everyone, organically grown, not dictated from above, not some hollow, rigid form, but rather one that's alterable on a daily basis, in the sense that situations here are continually changing.
- 155 [W]here then would the desolate go, the burdened, all the afflicted, where would they find rest from their toil?
- 156 [T]hat the body and blood of our company, symbolized by a pair of white stock certificates, had been devoured by another larger body.

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157 The Universe.

158 [I]n the Holy of Holies.

159 A little person, hands first, breaks through the vault of heaven, out of his world of sun, moon and stars into the next; like a chick, he breaks through the shell of our world and what does he see? Once again a world with a sun, moon and stars again, but which are bigger than ours are, and behind that yet another bigger world, and again yet another, and behind that ... [ellipsis the author's].

160 Yes, she has to make up for everything. She holds the moral world-balance. And however dishonest the others are, she has to be that much more honest. The deeper the tray of immorality sinks, the heavier she has to become on the other side.

161 As if everything had to balance out; as if one sat there watching above it all, to see that everyone gets his portion, makes off with his fat.

162 "Zusammenbinden" = "to bind together." "Zusammenfinden" = "to come together."  
 "Zusammenfügen" = "to join together." "Zusammenhalten" = "to keep together."  
 "Zusammenhängen" = "to be connected." "Zusammenpreßen" = "to press together."  
 "Zusammensammeln" = "to gather together." "Zusammensetzen" = "to put together."  
 "Zusammentun" = "to team up."

163 [A]s if there were no individual fates among us, as if it were all one irrefusable company fate, just like how the signs that refer to something happening are almost always collective.

164 THERE'S ABROMEIT.

165 [T]hinks he is a city, and everything rustles and rings through him.

166 For a moment for him, it's as if he forms the center of the city, exactly in the middle between East and West, and he has to hold the halves together ....

167 [H]e feels bodies circle around him, wander to the middle and struggle apart, surface, extinguish, like giant worlds; yes, everything around him has become as big as giants, and he, in the middle of it, as if he were the core ....

168 His fantasies flow over the banks, they are taken captive by his colleagues' lives, too much for him to be able to concentrate on himself for the brief time of the exam.

169 [L]ike a psalm that unites everything.

170 [A]s if he were running in circles in the wilderness.

171 [T]oday.

172 [T]he present.

173 Who is speaking? Is it me? Another? Does someone speak through me? Who speaks through whom? ... Listen up! Everyone is speaking. You hear us! We're in your head for as long as you live.

## CHAPTER 4: THE EQUILIBRIUM OF LUISA JOSEFINA HERNÁNDEZ

Luisa Josefina Hernández was born in Mexico City in 1928 and resides there still. She has been honored with the distinction of “profesora emérita”<sup>1</sup> by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México<sup>2</sup> (UNAM), where she taught theatre for thirty-six years. She has, to date, published sixteen novels, and as many as six more manuscripts are said to be in varying stages of completion<sup>3</sup>. Her plays number over forty, but since 1954 she has written them only on commission. Miguel Angel Quemain has compared her to a tailor, where drama is concerned. “Le piden la obra, le dan el tema, el número de personajes y sus características, ella los evalúa y escribe obras que podemos calificar de exclusivas y a la medida, como si fuera un sastre”<sup>4</sup> (244). As a result, it is the novel, she believes, on which her artistic reputation will rest for posterity. Nevertheless, as Quemain argues when he writes of Luisa Josefina Hernández’s novels, “[N]o le han dado el reconocimiento que merece”<sup>5</sup> (244). Still their value has not gone unrecognized by scholars. There has been a small but continuous stream of scholarly articles produced on her novelistic work, beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present day. Those who read and study them appreciate their worth, but the continuing absence of English translations has likely impeded more general recognition in both European and U.S. academia.

As I noted in the first chapter, several literary expressions or manifestations of fragmentation appear in either the structure or narration of her novels. To discuss in detail the structure that the author has selected for each of the sixteen novels that have thus far appeared, is beyond the scope of this paper. This is particularly true because one of her main hallmarks as an author is that she experiments widely with form. This speculation with style could not be said to be done exclusively for purposes of expressing the

fragmented modern psyche, as she uses a variety of traditional forms (the allegory, the commentary, the *auto sacramental*), as well as new twentieth-century variants on the novel. Hernández also, at times, writes within the inherited tradition of the Western novel (*La plaza de Puerto Santo* [1961],<sup>6</sup> *La cólera secreta* [1964],<sup>7</sup> *La noche exquisita* [1965]<sup>8</sup>), but as these works are the minority within her *oeuvre*, they could almost be termed experiments for her. “Hay novelas que las he hecho por la pura diversión del experimento,”<sup>9</sup> (246) she confessed to Miguel Angel Quemain in 1997.

*Las fuentes ocultas* (written in 1967, published in 1980),<sup>10</sup> is constructed in the form of a traditional realist novel, that has been modified to make use of the accepted literary devices of flashbacks as well as the “what happened next” glimpse into the future at the novel’s conclusion, that is allowed an omniscient, third-person narrator. Ten numbered chapters divide the work, and quoted speech is set off by dashes, the common substitute for quotation marks often employed in Spanish. Events merely hinted at in one chapter are spelled out in succeeding chapters. A chronological reading would put the chapters in this order: 4, 2, 7, 6, 8, 3, 9, 1, 5, 10, which corresponds to José Anadón’s time estimate of 1960, 1946-50, 1957, 1906, 1960, 1952-3, 1946-51, 1953-4, 1957-60 and 1960. Fragmentation per se is not otherwise present in the form, nor in the narrative voice, in which natural speech is rendered in the casual, approximate grammar common to it, as well as in narrative passages which take a more rigorously correct grammatical form.

Two of her novels, *Nostalgia de Troya* (1970)<sup>11</sup> and *Los trovadores* (1968)<sup>12</sup> are examples of what Steven G. Kellman terms “self-begetting fictions,” namely, works of fiction in which it is revealed at the end, sometimes prophetically, that these books, themselves, were to be written by one of the characters in the novel.

Like Reinshagen, she has at times explored assigning a different narrative perspective to each chapter (*La memoria de Amadís* [1967]<sup>13</sup> and *Nostalgia de Troya*) and

has used this device to allow the reader to glimpse each character from his or her own point of view (in the former novel) as well as to reveal the plurality of self of a single character (in the latter). Unlike Reinshagen in *Jäger*, however, in *Troya* the protagonist himself is allowed several chapters of his own in which to speak directly.

Hernández has not shied away from experimenting with highly fragmented narrative form, attempting in her first novel, *El lugar donde crece la hierba* (1959),<sup>14</sup> to reproduce the thought processes of a person obsessed and verging on madness. In this unnamed woman she has an untrustworthy narrator whose perceptions, it slowly dawns on the reader, should be questioned. The lucid and the deluded merge and blend in prose that shifts between letters, conversations, memories, hallucinations and thoughts expressed in a combination of stream of consciousness, narrated monologue and what Cohn terms “unsigned quoted monologue,”<sup>15</sup> that is, direct, interior thoughts of the character expressed in the third person, without quotation marks to guide the reader. Perhaps to offer some point of stabilization in the midst of this narrative chaos, she has divided the novel into standard, numbered chapters.

In *La primera batalla* (1965),<sup>16</sup> Hernández alternates between the chronological, third-person narration of the protagonist’s life in the even-numbered chapters of the novel, and the rambling meditations on various aspects of Cuba in the early 1960s, addressed to an unidentified *tú* (second person singular, familiar), in the odd-numbered chapters. The latter seems designed to convey atmosphere, rather than transmitting a plot line or telling a story in the manner of the even-numbered chapters. In the sense that these segments are jarring and only loosely connected, they could be interpreted as expressing the fragmented modern psyche. The experimental writing may also be intended to reflect the new, revolutionary nature of Cuba in the 1960s, as opposed to the stagnation of the pre-Castro regime. The Cuba chapters are fresh, vivid, charged with energy and the narrative

structure is non-traditional, while the chapters set in Mexico display a chronological plot and employ a well-established form of realist narration. Where the Cuban revolution has been transformational, the Mexican revolution has stagnated<sup>17</sup>.

Hernández has used a technique in three of her novels that I refer to as “the panoramic,” in which it is impossible to identify single or multiple protagonists. This role is so evenly spread out over such a large number of characters that it essentially disappears as a concept. To say that “the neighborhood” becomes the protagonist in *Almeida: Danzón* (1983)<sup>18</sup> or that “the hotel” serves that role in *Carta de navegaciones submarinas* (1987)<sup>19</sup> is stretching the bonds of credibility, as the plot is moved forward by the individual characters, united by place, but neither serves as the veins or organs of something larger than themselves. In the case of *Danzón*, these characters also form a community, but in eight short sections in the book, La Almeida itself (i.e. the neighborhood) appears as a separate character, presented not as a compound voice, but as the spirit of the housing development. Where the setting is a hotel, the epitome of the transitory, nothing could be more far-fetched, as the stability necessary for security, one of the hallmarks of true community, is normally absent<sup>20</sup>. *Carta* is a snapshot in time, taken with a wide-angle lens. And in her third panoramic novel, *El valle que elegimos* (1964)<sup>21</sup>, the multitude of characters circle around “the theater” in the same way ripples on a calm body of water circle around the point at which a stone was dropped. Any sense of ‘community’ in this setting is limited to the vague, general mode with which one refers to ‘the community of the arts’ and would certainly never be mistaken for a communal or symbolic protagonist.

All three of these novels also feature third-person omniscient narration, and none of them employ chapter divisions. All characters are named, with none appearing who are identified solely by a role or type. *Carta* and *Danzón* are separated into many short segments, 79 and 81 respectively, while *Valle* is formally divided into unequal thirds, the

first of which is sub-divided into 58 segments and the third of which reads like a series of the same. The focus of the first of these short segments, in all three cases, is on one character at a time, but this changes gradually as the characters are later shown to interact with each other in various combinations. These “segments” could be considered “fragments” of the type that do add up to a whole. Where the reader may experience some sense of disorientation at first, once past the initial introductions, the pieces fit together in a fairly consecutive order, without any holes or gaps remaining at the end. Thus, the form of Hernández’ work in these instances could not be said to express the type of twentieth-century fragmentation that is the focus of my first chapter, as the psychic dislocation dealt with there concerns an interior condition in which either some of the pieces necessary for completeness are missing entirely, or in which the pieces of several puzzles, so to speak, are contained within a single frame. Where fragmentation is defined as multiplicity, however, this panoramic framework could be said to express the condition well. So many (a feeling of too many?) characters, so many personality traits, so many separate stories to keep track of, so many sympathies to extend or retract!

A few additional words must be said about *Los trovadores*, since that novel will figure strongly in this chapter. The book is divided into seven numbered chapters, features the third-person omniscient form of narration, and quoted speech is set off by dashes, all of which are traditional stylistic elements. As the chapters proceed, the details interweave to form a piece of whole cloth, with the exception of the ‘hole’ of chapter two, a gap that is mended by chapter six and expanded upon by the final chapter. The order, however, is not chronological. If it were so, the chapters would have to be read in this order: 2, 3, 1, 4, 5, 7, 6.

Thus Hernández cannot be said to toy with the mechanics of the sentence or paragraph, nor to engage in the more extremely non-traditional varieties of narrative voice.

Where she does deviate from the chapter format to that of the fragment, it is a fragment that respects sentence and paragraph norms and which could be thought of as a short, unmarked (unnumbered, untitled) chapter, particularly as the sum of these segments adds up to a complete picture. The net effect is one of totality, rather than fragmentation. Thus we shall have to seek evidence of disunity and disconnection in her work elsewhere than in the exterior structure.

*Almeida Danzón:: Where One Plus One Is One*

“—Maestro, uno y uno son dos, ¿verdad?” (194) Asunción asks of his neighbor, Gervasio, in Luisa Josefina Hernández’ 1989 novel *Almeida Danzón*. Gervasio agrees, because he understands the question as arithmetic. Here, however, as in many other instances throughout this novel, one and one is one — and that is precisely the point. Asunción’s conclusion of the whereabouts of two of their neighbors is correct, but he has the arithmetic wrong. It is because one and one are one in a spiritual, psychological, even emotional arithmetic, that he has correctly identified the situation.

The many images and manifestations possible for the numbers one and two, run as a theme or *leitmotif* through many of Hernández’ works. The numbers ‘uno,’ and ‘dos’ and nouns and adjectives referring to the quantities ‘two’ and ‘one,’ appear frequently throughout the novel. Predominating in *Almeida Danzón* is the concept of the indivisibility of one, (although the author does continue to portray other relationships built on ones and twos in which wholeness is not the focus). This wholeness can be achieved in the context of passion (Ramón and Elodia, Don Ernesto and Verenna Marie) or marriage (Gervasio and Rutila, Asunción and Leona), but it need not be limited to male/female relationships, romantic attachments or social institutions. Hernández uses the seventy-three sections of her panoramic novel to explore the variety of combinations capable of producing the

wholeness she associates with the number 'one', including self-actualization. Further characterizations illustrate the lack of this integration in the lives of many people, both individuals and pairs, in a variety of combinations.

The earliest example of the wholeness of one appears immediately with the introduction in the first section of 'los maestros,'<sup>22</sup> who live in house number nineteen. One hallmark of their being one-out-of-two is that they identify themselves, both interpersonally and to the world around them, by this plural moniker. It is due to their own self-definition that the neighborhood refers to them by this two-in-one term, a kind of plural singular.

All but two of the eight sections that focus exclusively or primarily on 'los maestros' either begin or end with a line of the poetry or aphorisms that Gervasio is writing on a seemingly daily basis. Poetry serves as part of the foundation for their indivisibility as a couple in that, as Rutila acknowledges to herself, "El la escribe pero yo la conozco"<sup>23</sup> (9). Their neighbor, Señora Gómez, notes Gervasio's predilection for poetry and their oneness and sums it up as follows: "[E]l piensa en la poesía y ella en él ..." <sup>24</sup> (47). She believes that she understands what binds them. But as she herself has yet to experience wholeness in her life, her appraisal of her neighbors is not entirely trustworthy. Rutila may serve as muse to Gervasio, although what the reader sees of his poetry does not specifically include the figure of the muse, but she is certainly much more to him than this alone. In Gervasio's view "Rutila era también su hija .... También era su madre, su amante, su sierva, su compañera"<sup>25</sup> (72). Likewise, he plays multiple roles for her.

Gervasio Gonzáles and Rutila Cervantes were both only children, and they endured a solitude that they experienced as emptiness. In addition, Rutila was born out of wedlock and never knew her father. Singled out by their playmates for their unusual family situations, and sharing also the pressure brought to bear by middle class parents with high

expectations of their children, the two became friends. Rutila took the traditional path of a woman in patriarchal society, that of passivity, becoming almost an apprentice to Gervasio. “Leía los libros mencionados por él, repetía sus opiniones, copiaba sus actitudes y palabras”<sup>26</sup> (71). Such servility would not seem to promise the unity necessary for wholeness. Likewise, when one learns that Rutila has memorized the ‘lessons’ of her husband and can repeat them perfectly in conversation with him, although in private she disagrees with him about the ‘naturalness’ of the procreative impulse, one might question whether these two are indeed one. Keeping her divergent opinion to herself, rather than making their disagreement a subject for discussion, certainly restricts the climate of openness between them. But insofar as the majority of Gervasio’s ‘lessons,’ his philosophical or moral stance on given issues, are concerned, she views them as “las perlas del intelecto conyugal ... [que] ... debían atesorarse”<sup>27</sup> (54). What she finds important is that she know her husband’s beliefs, not necessarily that she agree with them. But while Rutila does not always express her own point of view when it differs from her husband’s, Gervasio has also made his sacrifices. This man, once so ambitious, found that his partnership with Rutila changed his outlook. He chose not to go on to study at the University in Mexico City, “porque le bastaba con una sola admiración, con el aprendizaje de una sola alumna adelantada, con la adoración de una sola persona”<sup>28</sup> (72).

Can duplicity exist and still make a single of a duo? It can, as Hernández repeatedly shows throughout this text. No unity in these pages is seamless or perfect, because wholeness is not the result of perfection, but of equilibrium. The mere existence of any given indivisibility is a marvel, like the wonder of a fragile treasure, be it of nature or manufacture, in this rough and violent world. The essential oneness of ‘los maestros’ is established not only by their complementary relationship to poetry, but also by compatible behaviors and understandings outlined as the story progresses. There may be duplicity at

times in their relationship, but there is also great accord and an absence of enmity to balance it.

Gervasio thinks in platitudes, many of which become ink on the pages of his copybook. Rutila's world view is more organic, but her observations complement his perfectly, as is highlighted by Justina's visit in the thirty-fifth section. Both note the falsehood of Justina's presentation, but where Gervasio hears it in her words, which are too perfect to be spontaneous, Rutila sees it in Justina's physical self. It's too good a performance not to be made up, as Justina is in face (i.e. to which she has applied cosmetics) and dress (i.e. a costume) for the first time Rutila can remember.

'Los maestros' relate to Justina solely as a couple, sometimes covertly as in the case of Justina's visit following her confrontation with Elodia. However, more often the relationship is overt, as in section forty-four, when they have decided to approach her with unpleasant news. "¿Quién se lo dice, tú o yo?"<sup>29</sup> Rutila asks, before deciding, "Mejor los dos juntos"<sup>30</sup> (156), to which Gervasio agrees. Likewise, when 'los maestros' agree that it is time to make a request of Justina, they do so together. Rutila explains, "[N]o quiero dejarte solo ... que se nos pase a los dos"<sup>31</sup> (246).

Although viewed as a unit, they do not always relate to their neighbors solely as a couple. The tradition, in the housing development, of the men working together on Sunday mornings to clear the street of debris, brings Gervasio into contact with his neighbors without Rutila by his side, and allows him to relate one-on-one with Asunción. He also has — independently of Rutila, although all three teach at the same school — what he considers a friendship with Ramón. The latter, filled with modernist ideals in his youth, is now angry and bitter. Where once he avidly crusaded for population control, visiting remote villages in rural areas to explain birth control methods, he is now married to Justina, the father of three sets of identical twins, and living next door to "los maestros" in number

eighteen. Ramón and Justina form a false pair; that is, they are a couple in the mathematical sense and in the eyes of the law alone. Ramón hates Justina because she has “let herself go,” but even more because she has borne three sets of twins. He seems unaware of his own biological and ethical contribution to the existence of these troublesome treble doubles. However, despite his resentment and frustration, he does take fiscal responsibility for the family.

Ramón expresses his disdain for his wife verbally, calling her “borrón”<sup>32</sup> (22) and “bruta”<sup>33</sup> (23). His contempt for his children is revealed in the long hours he remains away from home, leaving each morning before they wake and returning every night after 11:00 o’clock. Of his triple twins he complains, “Para dondequiera que miro veo doble. Tres veces doble ...”<sup>34</sup> (22). But, because his own relationship is a marital duo grown into a duel, never approaching wholeness, Ramón cannot recognize that the oneness of each pair of their children is a healthful unity. The three sets of identical twins, Pastor and Paulo at ten, Ramón and Remigio at nine, and Elenita and Clemencia at eight, all share with their respective other, that mysterious twin tie that makes each set one. Their mother knows that their duality is a blessing and reminds them at mealtime, “Antes vamos a darle gracias a Dios por habernos concedido el doble de lo que otros esperan”<sup>35</sup> (23). Even the neighbors notice. When Teresita remarks, “Justina siempre está contenta,”<sup>36</sup> Señora Gómez notes it’s because “piensa tanto en la maravilla de parir doble ...”<sup>37</sup> (48). Justina appreciates the wholeness that she sees in her children, but misses it subconsciously in her own life.

Ramón’s incessant complaints to his friend Gervasio, bely his claim to have resigned himself to seeing “caras dobles”<sup>38</sup> (55). It is also obvious that this resignation is feigned, as the word ‘doble’ is duly inscribed on a list of “palabras malas”<sup>39</sup> compiled and maintained by Paulo and Pastor, who evidently receive contradictory messages from father and mother. But while Ramón is only biding his time until another woman happens into

his life, Justina is passively seeking to drive him away, for both their sakes. Her feigned stupidity, her excessive ugliness, are both invented weapons in the battle to attain her own wholeness, which requires her freedom from Ramón.

On the other side of 'los maestros', in number twenty, lives a family of couples and singles and various other combinations. At the head of this grouping are Asunción Ramos and his wife Leona, practitioners of 'red magic' and 'white magic,' two benign forms of one strand of a native spiritist religion with links to nature, and wise dispensers of hallucinogenic mushrooms. They are one with each other, and frequently each experiences temporary union with one or more of the spirits that visit their home. As the novel opens, three sons, three daughters-in-law and seven grandchildren have just moved out of the three rooms that held them, following a fight staged to allow them to leave without feeling guilty. Leona is entirely unperturbed, as she finds her wholeness with Asunción alone, and the recent departures do not disturb her equilibrium. Asunción is preoccupied with the empty rooms, as he believes in the dictum that nature abhors a vacuum. He assigns one of these rooms to the cook, Manuela. Then, while he ponders whether or not to offer the others to his sons Armando and Roque and their spouses and children, who presently have but one room apiece, or to his fourteen-year-old daughter, Pilar, who sleeps in the living room, his prediction comes true. His good-for-nothing brother Hilario arrives on his doorstep, together with his wife Elodia and their degenerate son, Francisco. Doña Sinfarosa, the mother of Armando's wife Matilde, arrives at nearly the same time and engages the remaining room. This hard-working, seventy-year-old woman notes at once that Roque and María's five-year-old son, Daniel, is ill. She volunteers to take all five children into the room with her, allowing the two couples privacy for the first time in years. Daniel and his brother, as well as Armando and Matilde's three children, gladly move bed

and bedding into the room of this compassionate grandmother, who alone in the family knows how to play with children. It is as if a fresh breeze had blown through the house.

Asunción met Leona when he was apprenticed to a bricklayer and was studying nights with a spiritist. The daughter of a maid who worked in a wealthy household, Leona was being groomed by her mother to become the future owner of a beauty salon. He promised to make her as rich as her mother planned, but via spiritism. During their spiritual studies together Asunción never talked of love or took liberties with Leona. Only upon the death of their teacher did it become obvious that “algo había ocurrido entre ellos, una complicidad total, como si a través de frecuentar ideas espiritistas hubieran acabado igualándose en un solo ser”<sup>40</sup> (174). Although she was underage when they married and was never to see the promised wealth, due to a turn in the social climate that led to the persecution of spiritists, Leona nevertheless has no regrets. She and Asunción had found their wholeness in each other, and Leona knows that, when it comes to herself and Asunción, “Se alimentaban el uno al otro”<sup>41</sup> (213). From Asunción’s point of view Leona is all things in one, “la enfermera ... la cómplice ... la socia ... el acólito”<sup>42</sup> (101). His description of Leona reminds the reader of Gervasio’s view of Rutila. For both men, their partners enact multiple roles and serve in multiple capacities, albeit primarily traditional ones.

Also as with Gervasio and Rutila, however, this whole is shown not to be a seamless one. Asunción, although not educated in the formal sense, is both intelligent and practical. He enjoys his occasional conversations with Gervasio, who he finds “tan diferente a Leona ... un hombre inteligente, culto, buena persona”<sup>43</sup> (110). Although perhaps not meant quite so harshly as it appears, this thought is not very flattering to Leona. And while Asunción lacks intellectual food in his spouse, there is some indication that their religion is a matter of play-acting to her. Ostensibly they worship “La Deidad,”<sup>44</sup>

the spirit of an indigenous warrior, and are possessed at various times by spirits related to this one lord over all the spirits. But when upset or excited, Leona occasionally forgets “La Deidad” and refers to the “Dios”<sup>45</sup> of her childhood. Their relationship illustrates again the fragility of wholeness and the delicate balance that is necessary to maintain it within the couple.

Asunción approaches Gervasio as the two men work side by side and addresses the teacher with questions that plague him. Why, he wonders, is Ramón so frustrated with his children? “Ni que fueran tantos, yo también tengo seis.”<sup>46</sup> “Pero de uno en uno,”<sup>47</sup> Gervasio reminds him (111). And how does one come to have twins? Asunción wonders. “¿Usted cree que la señora Justina tenga dos matrices? ¿Se da el caso?”<sup>48</sup> (111). Gervasio cannot help laughing as he explains that Justina’s anatomy surely is normal, and adds that there will be no more children, as Ramón sent Justina to have her tubes tied after the birth of the last set of twins.

The twins, all three sets of them, are plagued by a boy, Asunción and Leona’s solitary brute of a nephew. Francisco, at thirteen, is under-controlled and over-defended by his mother, Elodia, and ignored by his father, Hilario. He throws rocks at the streetlights until the community is left in the dark, and he throws rocks at the twins each morning as they leave for school, picking them off “uno por uno, como si fueran guajolotes”<sup>49</sup> (24). Their mother advises them to ignore or even pity this bully, counseling, “El es uno solo como hay muchos ...”<sup>50</sup> (24), who is no doubt jealous of the plenitude, if not the completeness, of what he sees before him. Justina recognizes that at his core, Francisco is a lesser being, a fragmented or partial human essence.

One of the eldest twins, however, has decided to put an end to Francisco’s brutalization of himself and his siblings. Ten-year-old Pastor begins to save up his own allowance and Paulo’s as well, perceiving that, “para eso eran una sola persona y no dos,

como la mayor parte de los seres humanos”<sup>51</sup> (83). He plans to rent something expensive, a tool of violence. What, Paulo wishes to know, are they going to rent? “Si somos uno, debes saberlo,” Pastor replies, “Si no lo sabes, no somos uno”<sup>52</sup> (83). If they are indeed one and the same, Pastor suggests, discussion is inessential, being mere repetition. If Paulo finds a need to verbalize, his brother insists, they must no longer be one. What may seem a serious rebuke to the essential unity of the twins turns out merely to be a difference in style. The reader is shortly informed that Paulo all along both suspected and approved the idea that they were going to rent an air pistol from a boy at their school, but he would have wished for the opportunity to savor planning their reprisal on Francisco aloud.

The air pistol is rented and smuggled home. As Francisco passes their house on his way home after school a single shot is fired at his head, a shot that hits the bully in the mouth. The shot separates Paulo and Pastor from the other twins. Where their father has sometimes viewed all six as one big burden, it is the unit of two become one that now operates. Despite his basic revulsion at the idea of the attack, “ni por un momento había pensado Paulo que él no iría adonde fuera su hermano, así se tratara de la cárcel; tampoco Pastor”<sup>53</sup> (159). Their unity of action contradicts their diversity of temperament and makes of the two boys a different whole than is the combination Gervasio/Rutila or Asunción/Leona.

Soon thereafter, their father disappears from the home, and when they learn he has left, the older boys intuit that he’s gone forever, and assume it is probably because of the shot they fired. Pastor proposes they continue to murder all the bad people, to which Paulo protests, “Si haces eso, también tú eres malo”<sup>54</sup> (160). Pastor responds, “Pues sí, pero no importa. Para eso estás tú, que eres bueno”<sup>55</sup> (160). The idea puts Paulo in a sweat and causes him to wonder, “¿Cuánto tiempo, cuántos días y noches viviría ... compartiendo los secretos de su hermano y además su destino?”<sup>56</sup> (160). The two form an uneasy whole.

On the exterior, Paulo and Pastor look like one and the same boy, identical in every way. That, however, is where the uniformity ends. The twins as two do not form a single whole because they are exact duplicates of each other, but rather, because they are two sides of a whole, because a careful, sometimes unwilling, balancing act maintains an equilibrium which requires the participation of both to exist, much as it does for their twin sisters, Elenita and Clemencia, who demonstrate their essentiality to each other by constant contradictions. As Barbara Hannah remarks, much of the tension between them is because, "it is very difficult for a highly moral man — the "upright twin," ... to see that the "unjust twin" possesses much wisdom he lacks" (69).

Paulo accepts and believes that he is fated to forever equalize the wickedness of his twin by his own type of goodness. Before their revenge on Francisco, Pastor had done nothing more than entertain thoughts that discomfited his brother. Once the deed was done, however, the evil thoughts grew in scope and intensity, frightening Paulo. Neither boy is wicked by nature, but both are vulnerable. A gulf was growing between them that could have led to a split, rupturing wholeness and leaving both boys adrift. Paulo and Pastor eventually diverge to such an extent that they come to blows while trying desperately to agree over whether or not they hate their father and want to forget him.

An unexpected halt is put to this turn in their relationship by Norberto Gómez, the prodigal son who has returned to his mother and his community and who has been hired as a servant by Justina. Norberto reveals to the squabbling twins that he saw the shot fired but had, naturally, been unable to tell by which of the two. Now that they have revealed the culprit, Norberto holds him in his power and threatens to divulge the secret should Pastor again deviate from an acceptable moral standard of goodness. Relieved to have opportunity for evil blocked, the twins are once again whole, but believe themselves tainted, Pastor for having shot Francisco, Paulo for admitting to hating his father. Pastor

tells Paulo “Tú ya no eres bueno,”<sup>57</sup> to which Paulo replies sadly, “No, ahora soy malo, igual que tú”<sup>58</sup> (238). Norberto also quickly puts an end to this nonsense, explaining, “Uno no se vuelve malo aunque quiera, no es posible, lo sé por experiencia ...”<sup>59</sup> (238). The twins retain their wholeness, regain their unity and return to the new routines of their life/lives.

Norberto has worked to preserve the twins’ wholeness as one who affirms in others a quality he himself has but barely grasped in one sense, and entirely missed out on in another. The rebellious boy who left home at fifteen has returned prematurely decrepit and humbled, seeking — perhaps some wholeness in — the family he fled, as Carl Vaught would likely maintain. He brings a wife, Teófila, as worn and tattered as himself but who, like he, is capable of working with the endurance of a beast of burden. He did not expect to find his family gone— his father dead, his siblings married and immersed in their own lives. Although Norberto, who ran away from home as a teenager, has been a constant burden through the years on his mother’s heart, Señora Gómez does not know how to welcome this prodigal son, who in no way resembles the boy who left home. While she allows them to build a hut on lot number ten, which she also owns, she welcomes them into her house more as servants than as family. In fact, the entire community views them as servants, and Señora Gómez does nothing to dispel the notion, confiding only in her likewise elderly, widowed neighbor, Teresita, that Norberto and Teófila are her relatives. When Justina eventually hires them as servants (“[e]lla ... hizo la proposición en plural ...”<sup>60</sup> (225) or rather, in double, a single offer to a duo who form but one entity) — at half the pay she would ordinarily have offered for two — the whole development relaxes.

While in the economic sense Justina has done the Gómez couple an injustice, in a metaphorical sense the two really are one, an increasingly stable whole. In fact, what is said of their hut could be said of their relationship: “El aspecto general era parchado,

improvisado, pero no necesariamente frágil, con algo cómico y atrevido, nada repelente, por cierto”<sup>61</sup> (215). Norberto, who set off to do ill, to seek adventure of the shady sort, has returned home defeated in the effort, resigned to his life, seeking substance, and accompanied by his like. Although Teresita frets that their reception by Norberto’s mother is uncharitable and unfitting, this prodigal son and his wife do not chafe under it nor seem to expect better. They make for themselves a home and a place in Almeida where they may continue to nurture their indivisibility and help preserve that of others.

Norberto’s return, which may have been one more chance for wholeness in the life of Señora Gómez, is not utilized in this way by the widow. Señora Gómez is single and alone and insufficient in her oneness. She has had opportunities for growth, but has not utilized any of them, neither with husband, friend, children nor self. She has grown used to her solitude and jealous of it, but not whole in it. She suffered when Norberto left home as a teenager, feeling guilty of poor parenting, as she did not when the others left home at the proper time. She passed up the chance for fulfillment through her grandchildren, “considerándolos como uno de los grandes peligros para la integridad de los ancianos”<sup>62</sup> (186). Her friendship with Teresita could also have been a venue for wholeness, but she has chosen to keep the relationship a distinctly formal one. They maintain the ‘Usted’<sup>63</sup> form of address in their conversations, and although Señora Gómez addresses her neighbor as ‘Teresita,’<sup>64</sup> this informality is not permitted in return. Teresita, like the reader, knows her neighbor only as “Señora Gómez.”

The two widows share sweets and baked goods, beverages, conversation, status and the task of sweeping the sidewalks before their houses. They discuss the concepts of love and marriage together and agree that neither of them believes in love, nor in obedience to husbands, and that both find feminism disgusting as, from their shared perspective, it only increases the already horrendous workload upon women. Of herself Señora Gómez

says, “[E]s horrible estar acompañada,”<sup>65</sup> (169) a belief she may have formed during her years of marriage, but one which certainly influences her continuing separation from both her friend and her son.

However, late one night Señora Gómez observes something shocking and disturbing, something that strikes at and unsettles her understanding of herself. What she spies, and which she finds both fascinating and repulsive, is a couple copulating in the street. She recognizes them as the father of the many twins and the mother of the juvenile delinquent. She does not turn away quickly.

Unbeknownst to Señora Gómez, a shot had been fired earlier that day, the shot that had injured Elodia’s son. When Elodia failed to receive satisfaction in this matter from a polite but mystified Justina, she bided her time, staking out the house in the evening and waiting the many hours until Ramón’s return. The hardened, though physically stunning woman, and the man disgusted with his life, sense an instinctive, animal passion for each other which they enact in the human ritual in the street, unknowingly observed by the widow, who does not watch long enough to see them flee the Almeida development, without stopping even to collect a few things from their respective houses.

Contemplating what she’s seen, Señora Gómez comes to the realization that her own husband was tepid, and that she’s never known romantic love. Up to this time she “consideraba su matrimonio un éxito: había lealtad entre ella y su marido, decencia y buen trato”<sup>66</sup> (187). Now she senses something was missing that might have joined them as one. When she relates what she’s seen to Teresita, Señora Gómez describes Ramón and Elodia as “Esos que nos echaron a perder el recuerdo de nuestro matrimonio”<sup>67</sup> (205). But the widow never connects with the lives around her that could bring her into wholeness, nor does she grasp the opportunity for self-actualization as a single, continuing to pursue — and achieve — the mistaken goal of self-sufficiency, even in the wake of her realization.

Señora Gómez consistently fails to recognize what she sees or to understand what she herself describes. Remarking of Norberto, “Parí un hijo hace mucho tiempo y ahora resulta que tengo dos criados ...”<sup>68</sup> (216), the widow focuses on their condition as servants, rather than the fact that where there was once one, there are now two, perhaps because these two form, incomprehensibly to her, a single whole.

Señora Gómez is not the only portrait of the individual as insufficient. Number twenty-two, the last house in the development and that farthest from the main cross street, has been purchased by a most unusual person. Verenna Marie Star is an oddity: artist, teacher, foreigner, hippie, perhaps even on the border of being autistic. This forty-year-old woman shuns traditional society. Her weavings are masterful, making her relatively wealthy without kindling in her any love of money. She lives to weave and to teach weaving and has traveled the world as her art led her. At forty she invests in a house in her adopted country, and although the Almeida community views her as an outsider due to her U.S. origins, bad accent and bad tone — although adequate grammar — when speaking Spanish; unusual and unusually sparse clothing; open and comfortable use of swear words and street slang; status as both artist and spinster; ineptitude at households, houses and housekeeping; the government has made her a Mexican via an ‘acta de nacimiento’<sup>69</sup> in recognition of her contribution to the nation’s art. In so doing they have symbolically stripped her of her ancestry, recording incorrectly on the document the names of both her parents and all four grandparents, while inscribing Verenna’s own name accurately.

It is no more than she has long felt within herself to be true, having separated emotionally from her family at a very young age, even before being shipped off to a school for problem children at ten years old. It was there she encountered weaving and herself. By age fifteen she was teaching her art and learned that teaching weaving was as inborn as weaving itself, “ambos innatos por una ley de equilibrio universal”<sup>70</sup> (63).

Verenna is oblivious to everything unconnected with weaving, habitually losing passports, eating food only raw and living on the floor amidst her threads and looms. “Nadie la amó y ella no amó a nadie: ésa era su clave y ella lo ignoraba ...”<sup>71</sup> (68). But there is no wholeness in her absorption in the sphere she has carved for herself. Wholeness, for Luisa Josefina Hernández, as for Carl Vaught and Walter Thiessen, requires community as well as individuality in order to achieve the necessary equilibrium.

What is said of Verenna Marie Star could be said equally well of Señora Gómez from her own perspective. Although it is arguable that both Teresita and Norberto love her, she herself would unlikely deny loving others. But Señora Gómez, self deluding, prefers not to see herself in Verenna. Commenting to Teresita, the widow observes, “Si a nosotras nos preguntaran quiénes somos lo diríamos con facilidad: viudas, pensionadas, algo nos dan los jóvenes, a mí mis hijos y a usted sus sobrinos; queda claro, ¿no? Si a ella le preguntaran lo mismo, se quedaría callada”<sup>72</sup> (50). But Señora Gómez is wrong about knowing herself any better than Verenna Marie knows herself. She can list only external categories by which others might describe her, but does not know, and therefore cannot describe, her own essence. Both women are isolated from that which would make them whole, either in relationship with others or through development of the resources available to them from within.

Verenna Marie Star is not the only outsider present in Almeida. In number twenty, the home of Asunción and Leona and their numerous family, there also resides Manuela, an “india,”<sup>73</sup> their cook. Leona encountered her in the marketplace where she was resting after weeks of travel through wilderness, having fled famine. Although she speaks Spanish, she refuses to think in it and, even after many years in this household, Manuela still feels like an outsider. “Se sentía india frente a una familia que sin duda no tenía diferencias étnicas con ella, pero en la cual no se veía nada parecido a lo suyo”<sup>74</sup> (240). It

is the class difference between them she senses, compounded by the differences inherent in a rural, versus an urban, upbringing.

Manuela, in direct contrast to Verenna, shies away from no one. Not only does she live closely surrounded by a very large family, but every male in the family other than Asunción has slept with her, including thirteen-year-old Francisco. Leona has a theory about Manuela's promiscuity, namely, "que Manuela había perdido durante las penalidades y los sucesos de su único viaje la idea de la pareja y la familia"<sup>75</sup> (241). But the reader, and possibly the family, learns nothing about Manuela's life prior to her arrival in the city, leaving Leona's statement, at best, mere speculation and, at worst, base prejudice. Given their class differences, Manuela may not have the option Verenna does of guarding her body, surrounded as she is by people whose power, both because of their male sex and their higher class status, is greater than her own.

In contrast, considerable information is present on Verenna's family history and the source of her alienation from them, which has been the root cause of her avoidance and suspicion of family life in general. The reader is plainly told that Verenna senses "un odio frenético a la institución de la familia"<sup>76</sup> (142) as well as toward other social institutions. Her family had been the first to speculate that she might be mentally retarded, and while she has played the part at times in order to extricate herself from uncomfortable situations, she has resisted believing the charge has any factual basis. Eventually she decides that her opposition to the family remains in place only because no one has ever convinced her that to live other than she does might actually be worth the cost.

Manuela, as noted, is as surrounded by persons as Verenna is isolated from them, but what both women experience is essentially the same solitude. Like Verenna, Manuela has a sense of color and a facility with her hands, which she employs in clothing construction and embroidery. But where Verenna can claim an identity in the form of her

name, even that has been stripped from Manuela following her arrival in the foreign environment of La Almeida. Manuela's given name is María, but as Leona preferred to avoid confusion between the servant and the daughter-in-law, she christened the native woman with the lower-class name, 'Manuela.' No surname is ever given. Thus, where Verenna has been symbolically stripped of parentage, Manuela has been stripped of even her own identity.

Comparing the two in a passage that may be giving away too much to the reader, the narrator observes Verenna and Manuela to be,

cada una el extremo de la misma madeja. Las dos extranjeras, olvidadas de su propia cultura, nómadas en un tiempo, ahora establecidas, las dos al margen de este mundo inconcebible y ajeno. Las dos con la cabeza llena de un sistema distinto de símbolos: sus propios idiomas. Las dos artistas, las dos enamoradas de la belleza creada por sus manos, las dos capaces de tejerse y bordarse la existencia. Alguna vez se reconocerían y podrían por fin hallar el espejo que las reflejara cabalmente.<sup>77</sup> (242)

The mirror image reference is apt, because when Manuela looks in Leona's mirror, she is never sure that the image she sees is herself. What she sees is other than the girl she remembers having been in the mountains, although possibly it is this 'Manuela,' herself a stranger to the cook. The mirror image, another form of the double, is mentioned in such a specific manner only in reference to these two characters. This mirror image is one more twist on the concept of two being one, the reflection being an exact reverse of the original. An observer sees two images of a single being and indeed, the reflection is not independent of the one who casts it. In this case the two-in-one image is metaphorical, implying no relationship to either literal unity nor to wholeness.

House number nine is inhabited by a single person, but by two entities, which is further complicated by the fact that the occupant, Don Ernesto, a lawyer, is in himself an unhealthy duo. The house originally belonged to his aunt, Josefina, who continues on — present, but invisible — as a ghost. He talks things over with her and leaves letters for her to read when the topic is too earnest for the spoken word alone, and he continues to seek her advice, both from his memory and from her continuing presence in the house.

Don Ernesto had moved back into number nine, bringing his two sons with him, following his divorce from Estela, their mother, a shallow, frivolous woman he had married for her wealth. True to Tía Josefina's predictions, Ernesto had seen none of that money, even while they were married. He harbors a deadly resentment against Estela, such that part of his daily regimen, nearly two decades after their divorce, includes plotting her murder. Don Ernesto cannot free himself from Estela. He continues to be part of a duo, one that is both unwhole and unhealthy, chaining himself to his ex-wife via his rancor, long after she has ceased to be aware of his existence. As his unhappy marriage was ending, his wise aunt had identified the basis of his kinship with his wife, "Estela y tú se parecen en una sola cosa. ... No pueden soportar la idea de casarse por amor, tiene que ser por dinero"<sup>78</sup> (44). Although Don Ernesto admits to himself that she is right, insofar as he could never have been satisfied with a woman of his own class, he nonetheless holds fast to his fantasy of revenge and it separates him from others, as it did while his aunt was still alive. His polite distance from people in the development has always mystified Teresita, as Don Ernesto remained remote from her even as his sons became her favorites.

Ramón and Elodia believe themselves to have been granted wholeness in what seems a second shot at life. Having set up quarters in a nearby town, they leave their past behind almost completely. Ramón cuts off his friendship with Gervasio, using a student go-between to deliver the monthly envelope containing money for Justina and the children

to his former friend. The lovers' passion, "salvaje y primitivo"<sup>79</sup> (139) is the essential, and perhaps only, ingredient of this particular example of unity. Elodia, always beautiful, sheds the coarse aspect she had carried, putting forth the shoots of the new woman she is becoming. Ramón also changes for the better, both physically and temperamentally. He views himself and Elodia as having been driven together, "impelidos por sus parejas más que por sí mismos ..." <sup>80</sup> (243), in yet another twist on Hernández' *leitmotif* of ones and twos. Out of two false wholes has miraculously formed a single true one. They take as their symbol "un árbol de amate enclavado en una piedra"<sup>81</sup> (244) and feel themselves chosen by the gods.

But is this wholeness? Luisa Josefina Hernández certainly portrays them as happy and convinced this life is a vast improvement on the past. But she also takes pains to paint them as separating themselves from nearly all communities outside. Although Ramón continues to teach at the same school, they move to a different neighborhood, but take no active part in it. Yet their very presence may be a part of the equilibrium of their new neighborhood. And it may have been necessary, for equilibrium to be established in La Almeida, that they leave.

Ramón is unaware that his departure is the impetus for the formation of another healthy being, as Justina immediately begins a forward process of becoming whole in herself. She loses weight, begins to dress carefully, does her hair and applies makeup. It is the cultural feminine game she is playing, but she plays it out of a new confidence in herself and her abilities. Her steps become lighter. She had always based her instructions to the children around keeping their father pacified. The threat of his anger had also been the source of her power over them. Now she comes into her own authority. She finds work in her brother's restaurant, and will soon move into a place in the administration of his new resort hotel. Justina has her teeth replaced with dentures made by the sister-in-

law. It becomes evident that it had always been in her power to have her teeth fixed, but that she had chosen not to, perhaps intentionally to appear repulsive to Ramón. Once economically secure, she agrees to Gervasio and Rutila's suggestion that she renounce Ramón's money, and does so under the conditions that he never have any contact again with either herself or the children, and that there be no divorce. "[E]star casada," she maintains, "es buen pretexto para no volverse a casar"<sup>82</sup> (248). Justina recognizes that, in her case, her wholeness depends upon remaining solo. She may take lovers in the future, but no vows.

Hilario, like Justina, subconsciously did all he could to drive his spouse away, or so Gervasio believes. In this respect Hilario and Justina are one and the same, but not in the way that being one can be equated with being whole. Gervasio is actually aware that Justina and Elodia are doubles of each other. "[E]sas dos mujeres son iguales,"<sup>83</sup> he muses, yet they appear to be opposites, "Elodia ... tan horrible pero tan guapa [y] Justina tan estropeada pero tan amable .... La única diferencia es el estilo"<sup>84</sup> (131). Because the two women are the exact reverse of each other, it is again an example of the mirror image.

Not only is Gervasio meditating upon the pairing, doubling and reflecting present among his neighbors, but, as he explains to Rutila, he's "reconstruyendo la historia de Ramón desde el otro punto de vista. ... ¿Te das cuenta que hasta ahora la hemos visto al revés?"<sup>85</sup> he asks. "Por eso, cuando dos personas se pelean, existen dos historias y no una como sería de rigor. Estar de acuerdo es vivir una sola versión de la vida"<sup>86</sup> (223). What Gervasio dimly understands is that examining anything from two directions, from two points of view, produces one, complete understanding, that forward and reverse are complimentary sides of a whole. This agrees with Asunción's observation early in the novel that "En este mundo todo tiene dos caras. Hay dos verdades."<sup>87</sup> His wife had agreed with this, but then referred to the two truths as "[l]a de ellos y la nuestra"<sup>88</sup> (40),

adding an implication of disunity that her husband hadn't intended. In this case, Rutila agrees with her husband. Not only is she observing Justina flourish, but she also feels a sort of respect for the runaway lovers, noting that "[M]uy pocos seres humanos tienen oportunidad de hacer eso. Pero todavía más pocos, como Gervasio y ella, encuentran jóvenes la felicidad"<sup>89</sup> (203).

Asunción also comments on the vanished lovers. Meditating on Elodia, his erstwhile sister-in-law, he sees her in his mind as skimpily clad and parked in a distant constellation "atravesando los círculos y los triángulos de un dibujo astrológico"<sup>90</sup> (214). A circle represents the eternal, the unending, wholeness, one. A triangle may represent the romantic triangle, pointed, angular, three, that which is never whole. Elodia has now known both the jarring triangular relationship in her experience of a family triad (father, mother, degenerate child), as well as — fleetingly — a romantic triangle (herself, her husband and her lover), and the endless circle of unity she now experiences with Ramón.

Exposed in the wake of the lovers who fled is another false whole, that of Francisco and Elodia. The boy had always run to his mother for protection after his frequent acts of delinquency, then cheered both proudly and deprecatingly as she did his fighting for him. This was a destructive pattern, however, which did not make them one. Francisco is convinced that it was his failure to unite with his mother in her protest and outrage at his shooting that caused her to abandon him. There has never been even the pretense of a bond with his father. As far as Hilario is concerned, Francisco is welcome to leave anytime and not return. Francisco must confront his isolation and he is afraid. His uncle, Asunción, shows more interest in him than does Hilario, but both he and his father are welcome to remain with Asunción only so long as they fulfill certain conditions, namely, that they contribute their labor to the family.

Asunción and the brother who seems so unlike him form another unlikely pair. The elder suddenly comes to a partial recognition of this, in the midst of a comical scene in which both would like to smoke, but refrain due to each others' presence. Asunción realizes that, "Hilerio no servía para nada porque él, Asunción, servía para todo. Podía ser ... Ley del Equilibrio"<sup>91</sup> (212). The "Ley del Equilibrio" is Hernández's touchstone of wholeness, and another form of doubling, one which implies balance. Asunción's description of the two brothers also recalls the idea of the mirror image. The two are the reverse of each other in the same fashion as Elodia and Justina are reflections.

Sometimes, as in the case of Justina, it is separation that leaves one whole, a stripping off of the burdensome second so that the one that remains may self-actualize. In other cases, as with Ramón and Elodia, there must be a separation from the false whole in order to form one true entity. The "other" or second that Don Ernesto strips off is his hatred of Estela and the dominion it has over his thoughts. Although remnants of this hatred remain, as evidenced by the letter he writes his aunt, they are ever diminishing and allow Don Ernesto, like Ramón and Elodia, to get a second shot at life, or perhaps a shot at a second life, with Verenna. Attracted to her partly because she is, for him, "una variedad desconocida"<sup>92</sup> (122), toward whom he feels "filial y paternal"<sup>93</sup> (199), the two are moving toward wholeness together at the end of the novel. Verenna trusts Don Ernesto to furnish her house and to tactfully teach her how to live in it. Don Ernesto, for his part, recognizes, accepts and even values that Verenna's most fundamental and important passion is weaving, something he acknowledges that his love will not supplant. However, I would maintain that he is still directed on a slightly false track, as he employs the verb "conquistar"<sup>94</sup> in reference to Verenna, and although it be for life and even after death, as he maintains to his aunt, that verb is incompatible with true oneness in a relationship. He's also misguided in believing himself in love because she makes him feel 'poderoso,'<sup>95</sup> and

although it is virtues the relationship causes him to feel the “dueño”<sup>96</sup> of and –rightfully– not Verenna herself, he does think of her as a symbol rather than as an equal. Their chances for long-term wholeness as a couple are threatened unless Don Ernesto proves himself able to work through these images. The joyful tone of the narration implies that the reader is encouraged to be optimistic about their future.

The relationship of Doña Sinforosa and Daniel Ramos, as well as that of Doña Sinfo and Daniel’s mother, María, are also important illustrations of the routes possible by which two may become one. Doña Sinfo is not the grandmother of five-year-old Daniel. She’s the grandmother of his cousins, but functions in this role with all of Asunción and Leona’s grandchildren. The boy is dying of leukemia, and as the disease works its course, he is in the constant care of Doña Sinfo — physically held by her for the most part. His mother, María, at last comes to Doña Sinfo to ask what she can do. “Ya nada”<sup>97</sup> (209) is the response. From that moment on, the reader is informed,

María se sintió dividida; había dos Marías en vez de una. La que vivía en el cuarto con Roque y esta otra, la que se convertía en Sinforosa y se entregaba a la muerte de su hijo. Las dos mujeres se miraban como entre brumas en medio de una densa comprensión: María no abandonaba al niño, Sinforosa no se daba a una criatura ajena de su sangre, era una transformación que las unía, una fuerza materna única, con dos cuerpos, más que si fueran madre e hija, como una abstracción tangible para este tiempo y este espacio. María no tocaba a su hijo porque estaba tocándolo, vibraba en los brazos de Sinforosa como en los suyos propios, se había desdoblado de amor y de tristeza.<sup>98</sup> (209)

The oneness of María with Doña Sinfo is spiritual, mystical, but also a fragmentation of self. Doña Sinfo is indeed a María, a Mary who holds her dying son like

a small Christ. But in this very personal tableaux it is not the Christ child who suffers for the sake of the world, but Doña Sinforosa who suffers, that María may be spared.

Doña Sinfo and Daniel, who are one in a different sense than are Doña Sinforosa and his mother, being one in the intensity of suffering, die at exactly the same moment. While Asunción identifies this grandmother as “lucky,” Matilde is enraged that her mother died caring for a child not of her own blood. Verbal assaults become physical, and as Don Asunción separates Matilde and María, he remonstrates with the former, admonishing her sternly, “Estás deshaciendo lo que tu madre hizo: quiso proteger a María para que no sufriera tanto ... Esto no es asunto tuyo sino de ellas dos”<sup>99</sup> (256). So far as his understanding reaches, Matilde’s father-in-law comprehends the situation well. What he does not see, and what María herself can only think and feel, but not express aloud in words, is how she and Doña Sinforosa became one and the same person, or rather, how she herself divided into two persons, one of whom is now dead. María has lost a son and a part of herself. She is again one in the physical, mathematical sense, one alone beside her husband Roque, another autonomous individual, in which the combination of ones adds up to two, a whole number, but not a number of wholeness. In another sense, in the emotional and spiritual arithmetic employed by the author, María is no longer even one, but some fraction of a person (half is implied) who must somehow regrow or refind that part of herself that died with Doña Sinfo.

Doña Sinforosa may have been the other half of María, but her unity with Daniel is to remain throughout eternity. The two are buried together in the same coffin, with nary a thought in the minds of any that it should be otherwise. Their bodies are removed together on the evening of the day of their deaths, but their spiritual leave-taking of the Almeida development follows early the next morning and is witnessed by Teresita. Out at dawn to sweep her portal, the widow, who knows nothing of their passing, watches the old woman

and the young boy rush by hand in hand. Without a second thought, Teresita steps off the sidewalk to follow them, but is recalled by Señora Gómez, who, when Teresita asks, “¿Los vio usted pasar?”<sup>100</sup> responds truthfully, “No vi a nadie”<sup>101</sup> (258). Was Teresita about to walk off into her own death? In a novel of ones and twos, one might assume she had turned towards death, but being unwhole in her own self, was called back in order to go further down the path toward oneness with her friend.

The changes the novel records as taking place in Almeida do so in one year, that is, in a time period that also represents wholeness and unity. The novel itself can be seen as a sort of a dance, and the characters as the dancers. In addition, the seven of the seventy-three chapters that feature La Almeida as a character herself, imply that a sort of indivisibility or oneness can be found on another scale in the grouping of a panoramic mass of humanity. The reader has been introduced to only a portion of the residents of the twenty-two houses that comprise the subdivision known as La Almeida, but this sample is enough to offer a reasonable argument of the existence of a macro level of wholeness above that of the individual characters. This has the effect of creating a sort of over-arching figure named “Almeida.” In addition, the form of the novel itself plays with ones and twos, not only in making the one, Almeida herself, out of the many singles and duos who populate her, but also beginning with an ending and ending with a beginning, thus producing two of each. The novel begins with the ending of the poem that Gervasio has been writing in his notebook. The novel also ends with a beginning, in the sense that Doña Sinfo and Daniel pass out of Almeida and into eternity, and Teresita and Señora Gómez (not to mention Verenna and Don Ernesto, given the latter’s new awareness), stand on the threshold of possibility, where wholeness is concerned.

There are, in fact, two founts of writing from beginning to end, as quotes from Gervasio’s notebook are spread throughout the novel in the sections that deal with ‘los

maestros.’ Gervasio tends more to platitudes than plot, and this serves as a distinct contrast to the novel that the reader has in hand. The voices of the characters likewise contrast with that of the narrator, whose more poetic tone is most obvious in the short sections that focus on ‘La Almeida’ as a character. La Almeida is referred to as a mirror [“espejo de la auténtica Via Celeste”<sup>102</sup> (89)] and as having an imaginary, silvery double in the moonlight (239). She also experiences a single ‘day’ lasting from one night to the next in the time the residents live through a year, thus presenting a second level of time in the novel, neither of which match the time of the reader or the reading time, but which together, again embodies the number of wholeness, which is one.

Is the setting of *Almeida: Danzón* an environment of fragmentation or splintering? Certainly, difficulties, dissatisfaction and unhappiness are shown to abound, but the telltale hallmarks of the modern malaise are assumed, rather than explicitly stated. The backdrop is a housing development within a large city in modern-day Mexico, or at least, the reader is permitted to assume the time is the late twentieth century. Although free of references to most modern appliances such as televisions, radios, telephones and electricity, there is also no mention of their antiquated counterparts, and Rutila is said to lean against the stove when she does her exercises in the morning. Streets are commonly paved, which makes it an aggravation that theirs has yet to be asphalted. Where there is pavement, one may assume motor vehicles. And although Asunción and Leona do not have indoor plumbing, this aspect of their home is spoken of as an anomaly. In the midst of one of the world’s major cities, their neighbourhood, like too many others, remains underdeveloped.

Thus, these characters are part and parcel of the modern world that is besieged by change and has experienced all of the jarring occurrences to which Morgan, Lifton, Greenburg and Gilbert and Gubar refer. While it is true that the society of the novel is a patriarchal one, it is also true that women’s roles within it are seen to be changing. When

Justina goes to work for her brother, he gives her a position in management. Girls and boys all attend the same school. Leona serves as spiritual medium in the same fashion as her husband. Rutila teaches school on a par with her spouse. Despite its paternalistic aspects, feminism, as well as industrialization and urbanization, is part of what shapes their world. And there is little mention of religion in traditional Christian terms. The older women speak of God and have Catholic images in their homes, but for the younger women, religion appears to play no part in their lives. The exception is, of course, Leona, who practices spiritism, but who lapses into her childhood Catholicism from time to time. It is fair to conclude here that the starting point of the journey toward wholeness in *Almeida: Danzón* is, indeed, one of multiplicity and disjunction.

The idea of a journey, whether interior or physical, is not evident in each and every character, but, in a sense, the entire community of La Almeida is on a quest for wholeness via the dance of life. Bits of the whole must spiral off, while a few from outside replace them. This residential development is an example of Thiessen's open community, able to absorb a stranger like Verenna, capable of releasing Ramón and Elodia. La Almeida blesses the passing onwards of Doña Sinfo and Daniel, and welcomes Norberto and Teófila. Even while postulating an ideal community, Thiessen admits that "they are all incomplete" (123) and that although "God is present in every community" (85), "[t]he God of every community is still distorted" (86). The seminarian's three dimensions are present in this novel, even if there is little evidence of God in the form he postulates. The individual and overlapping communities are clearly highlighted. The couple, the family, friend groupings, neighbors and the neighborhood as a whole within the larger city make up the shifting borders between people. Tía Josefina's presence, as well as the hurried passage of Daniel and Doña Sinfo attest to the ultimate. The latter also suggest that transfer to a new plane of existence simply provides a different setting in which a new journey

begins. But there is no evidence that there is a common or shared experience of the divine as an integrating center. The neighborhood may be stable, in terms of habits and relatively low mobility, but without the encounter with God in the wilderness it cannot provide the type of community the heart seeks, nor can wholeness as he understands it be experienced there, although it may well be approached.

What is also lacking here, according to Thiessen's description, is the wilderness experience. Although for Ramón and Justina personally, their marriage may have been a wilderness, it could also aptly be described as bondage, in which case, there was a calling out of bondage directly into community, as both physically enter the larger world at that point. For Norberto and Teófila, it appears, their wilderness experience is behind them and they are presented solely in the final phase of their journey — or at least, of this particular journey, as Thiessen is clear that he believes a person may go through several such cycles during a lifetime. Where for most of the characters La Almeida represents community, this may never be true for Manuela, who lacks the particular symbol system that would allow her to make sense of it. The one she carries with her is unrelated to what she experiences in this particular household and in this neighborhood, leaving her in a perpetual wilderness within.

Thiessen defines wholeness as integration, specifically, as “the development of an integrating center in one's life” (41), which is not present in *Almeida: Danzón*, and which allows the human being to find interpersonal security, vocation and truth. There is no good argument for this concept of truth in these pages, but many of the characters do know interpersonal security and have a strong sense of vocation. The open nature of this system has already been noted, satisfying the ‘liberation’ component of interpersonal security. The dialogues in which the characters engage would indicate that, for many of them, their

voices are both heard and responded to. Thus, some of the elements of wholeness as Thiessen understands it are very much present, while others are lacking.

What is missing for Thiessen is not identical to what Vaught might view as lacking. For one thing, Vaught permits a more generalized approach to the presence of the divine within community, with an emphasis on the mystery of God and the individual contact, and less insistence on God as a binding force for the community as a group. He also notes that where “rites and rituals are established to express ... meaning” (81), they also separate as well as bind, obvious in the figures of Verenna and Manuela, whose prior symbol systems do not match up with their present world.

But other than for Gervasio, Rutila and Asunción, there is little evidence of reflection. In addition, art is little present in most of their lives, even in the form of stories. Doña Sinfo is able to entertain the children with tales, Verenna weaves and Manuela embroiders, but most individuals lack both this artistic element as well as the philosophical. In light of Vaught’s concept of wholeness, La Almeida as a neighborhood comes closer to reaching that state than do the individuals. The characters do move toward a rough-edged harmony and a more inclusive unity as a group, and as a group can be said to reflect the components of art, religion and experience, it is again the philosophical element that is missing. As individuals, however, while some definitely show signs of the growing finite self-acceptance that characterizes individual wholeness for Vaught, many do not, and most have contact with even fewer than three of the four constituent modes of thinking that comprise it.

Neither Thiessen’s nor Vaught’s perspective on wholeness is broadly applicable to this novel, although one can locate elements of each of them in its pages. Reading *Almeida: Danzón*, it becomes obvious that Luisa Josefina Hernández herself has a clear and unique conception of what it means to be whole, both as an individual and as a group. Her

system is less minutely detailed than any of the three first examined here and must be gleaned from her works, rather than from an essay or an address that would spell out the particulars. This allows for an openness to variation beyond what either of the scholars can offer, while not stretching the basic parameters beyond credibility. Let us examine further examples of her work to test this theory.

*Los trovadores: Wholeness, Holiness, Brokenness and Alienation*

The unspecified setting for *Los trovadores* (1973) appears to be the Spain (or more probably Italy) of the late middle ages. It may just as well be the time of fairy tales, that long-ago mythical past of “Es war einmal” or “Habíase una vez” or “Once upon a time.” The action takes place in two villages, a city (sometimes said to be small, sometimes said to be large, depending on who’s speaking), the mountains that separate these three settlements, and a small kingdom on the other side of a forbidding mountain range. Mention is made, however, of the ending of the crusades and of “el reino de la cristiandad” (104), implying that the late middle ages is the historical frame. It is a time before asphalt, before electricity, mass transportation, or plumbing. The villagers depend upon their flocks of goats and sheep for their livelihoods, including the wool that they spin and weave. The personal pronouns used are, with one exception (an oversight?), those of peninsular Spanish. This includes the old-fashioned custom of employing the second-person familiar plural as the standard form of address by one of lower status to one of higher status. This is the “Vuestra merced,” the Spanish form of “the Royal ‘We’”.

But Spain is not necessarily the setting. Because, in the final chapter, the city is revealed to be the seat of the pope, the setting may actually be Italy, rather than Spain, in the same way that, for example, James Clavell places his novels in and around Japan but all dialogue is written in English. This would situate the setting of this work within a long and

necessary tradition, given the linguistic limitations of both the author and her readership. And although the pope is said here to live in a palace, rather than in a church or basilica or other religious building, his residence may well seem like a palace to a visitor from rural parts.

There is also strong argument for the timeless past of fairy tales, where the characters are concerned, because, while distinct, none of the principal actors are named. Even the chapter protagonists are identified by type: the former soldier, the forsaken wife, the old widow, the guardian of the cave, the young monk, the pilgrim, the other woman, the duchess, the mother superior from the provinces, the nomad chief, the meditator, etc. This vague, universal typing allows the reader to place him or herself in their shoes but also resists historical connection. Many of these types were present in any rural kingdom of the historical — and certainly in the mythical — past.

Consistent with the historical setting, it must be acknowledged that the causes of fragmentation, as outlined in Chapter 2, are not present here. One should not be surprised to find no evidence of fragmentation as defined by Morgan, Lifton, Greenburg, Brown or Gilbert and Gubar in this setting, given that all of these scholars list nineteenth- or twentieth-century causes as the root of this condition. Hernández's novel is set prior to industrialization, WWI, the births of Darwin and Freud, and the rise of empiricism. Certain elements identified with multiplistic societies are also missing. Survival depends upon knowledge of the mechanics of a broad range of tasks, so Morgan's "specialism" is not present. In fact, much is made of the former soldier's ability to be carpenter, mason, shepherd, weaver and inventor all in one. Survival also depends upon nature; hence, separation from nature would bring death, not the psychic disjunction of Morgan's day. Shepherds must know the lay of the land in order to be able to locate wandering animals. They must also know which pastures will provide their flocks the best grazing and how to

find them. Storms threatened destruction as well as promising renewal. Nourishment comes from the land, in the form of the grain ground for bread, and via conversion by animals into milk, meat, butter and cheese. The rapid change associated with modern disconnection is likewise absent, with life in this setting altering little from one generation to the next. Things do change, but so slowly as to be relatively easily assimilated. The former soldier invents a moveable, upright loom which will eventually become as broadly used as the backstrap loom then common. The crusades come to an end. At this pace, change is not threatening.

In fact, none of Morgan's conditions of fragmentation are fulfilled in this novel. Most people remain in the area where they were born. Religious faith is generally present, if mainly as a series of habits of both word and deed. But, although numbed in the hearts and souls of the people, religious belief lives on, in the form of Catholic Christianity and an unspecified tribal religion. The narrator displays a great deal of religious tolerance, and at one point the nomad chief, who practices the tribal religion, expresses the wish to the meditator that, "tu Dios se convierte en mi Dios ..." <sup>103</sup> (73). At another point, the chief questions the reasons behind the religious customs of his tribe. This religious element, along with the characters' closeness to nature, precludes some of the psychic isolation identified by several scholars as one of the components of fragmentation. Birth and death are routine and often linked. Death is respected, and though it brings sorrow to those who remain, it is not feared. In fact, death is the very thing the old widow prays for in the first chapter. It is not out of despair or anguish that she prays, but almost out of a sense of adventure. When she thinks of the things she might ask for, there is almost a modern cast to her reflections. She has already experienced every phase of life with which she's familiar. At last, she concludes her prayer with, "No podía pedir nada porque todo, todo lo

había poseído con excepción del acto de morir —. Dios mío, gracias ... Envíame la muerte cuando quieras, que de tus dones, sólo ése me falta disfrutar”<sup>104</sup> (39).

In addition, the characters don't question the power of language to communicate, although they respect the power of silence, and there is no media in the sense we understand it today. Books, mainly religious in nature, are copied, illustrated and bound by hand in monasteries such as the one where the young monk studies. The business of the village is conducted, as needed, in the central plaza. Women and men have separate, distinct roles, which are unquestioned. The young widow who the former soldier marries, along with her daughter, are praised by the narrator because they “sabían los deseos y las costumbres de los varones de su casa y los satisfacían con exactitud”<sup>105</sup> (236). Yet women are not powerless. They are repeatedly referred to as (and shown to be) better workers than most of the men. They are present in the plaza whenever decisions must be made, and they speak on an equal basis with the men. Although the village chief, the nomad chief and the pope are all men, the nomad chief is advised by a wise woman and most of the characters used to embody holiness are women. There is not true equality between women and men, but there is also no battle of the sexes evidenced here.

If the causes of modern fragmentation are absent, are the effects missing as well? Is it then born out that this is an age of wholeness? Doesn't such a setting fall well within the so-called “Golden Age” often referred to by narrators longing for a time of unity and cohesion? Yes, this setting, this period is one of hundreds that could be imagined to lie within that realm. Yet the fact is, that harmony is as absent here as it is today. No, the characters cannot be said to be living in a culture of disintegration. But is it amity and cohesion that is represented here? Do they live lives of fulfillment, integration and unity? No! They lead lives of brokenness and alienation, and seek that which would stand in opposition to it. Much as wholeness is not the only condition that stands in opposition to

fragmentation, so the latter is not the only condition that opposes the former. For wholeness could also be said to contradict the conditions present in this long-ago fictional world.

It could also be justly argued that this is a twentieth-century projection of the medieval world, which would be as true as the argument that the existence of a “Golden Age” of harmony and contentment extant in the distant past is also a recurring projection, not just of twentieth-century literati, but also of those who wrote during previous centuries. What poetry and songs we have from that time do not reflect an idyll, but rather, a bloody and dangerous age of superstition and fear. There is no less basis for this projection of a twentieth-century author back in time to a fragmented age, than there is for the “Golden Age” settings adopted by many others.

Brokenness is portrayed in many forms in *Los trovadores*. In the first village presented, the woman (“the forsaken wife”) whose husband has cheated on her with another, siring sons by them both before taking off for the hills, suffers hate and despair to the point where she questions her sanity. The pain she feels causes her nights of insomnia and she admits that, were it not for her child, she would probably commit suicide. Every glance, every comment by her neighbors seems to her to drip with pity, which isolates her, as much as does her situation. While adultery is not uncommon in the village, it is rare for it to be publicly acknowledged, and more unusual still for the man involved to flee. Rather than following the path of insanity, she elects illness, a shorter journey and one with known terminal points.

Life offers no more serenity for the other woman, whose son died several weeks after his birth. She owns no property other than her own clothing and her dead baby’s layette. Her encounter with the forsaken wife’s husband was more like a rape than an affair, although she has said things that would lead people to believe there had been more to

it. Having nothing, she had wanted the child. Without the child, the emptiness inside her is fast filling with hatred, the love of luxury and fierce determination. She is treated with scorn and derision in the village and is therefore alienated from others. Adultery is a sin and guilt is laid both at her feet and at those of the man involved.

This man, the adulterer, knows no peace, either. He lives in a stupor, herding the few goats he received as a dowry for his wife. His existence with his wife feels like a life sentence, and he stays away from home as much as possible, roaming the mountains with the goats. He has never been known in the village as either bright or much good at anything, and he married her for just eight goats, when at least twenty are required for a herd. People think of him as either a boy, or as a goat himself. Although rarely speaking, when pressed, he can articulate his thoughts. But this does not alter the alienation he feels. He shares no common ground with his wife or the other villagers.

The former soldier is also an example of discontinuity and alienation. After the war he remained in the city, drinking, whoring, gambling and thieving. He has no friends and no family, but plenty of drunken buddies. When he does not return, his mother in the village suffers both emotionally and economically. He stayed in the city not so much because of its temptations, but because he did not want the life he saw as being marked out for him since birth. This idea that the known is boring and fearful, the new exciting and desirable separated him from others in the village. But life in the city brought him only more, not less, isolation from others and a life of disconnection.

Finally, there is the example of the meditator. Although he sits transfixed before the face of God, awash in His glory for hours at a time, those holy lips remain closed. God says not a word to him, although the man has dedicated his life to meditating on Him. Despairing of his calling because no sign is ever given, i.e. he never hears the voice of God, the meditator also experiences frustration and self-doubt where his band of disciples

is concerned. He had never been told by God to seek out disciples (he has never been told anything) and, indeed, he had not asked these many young men to leave their homes, their wives and children, their herds and their village and follow him. He had simply preached on the beauty of contemplation of the face of God, on the ethereal nature of meditation, and they had followed him. But these men have no gift for this divine vocation. Theirs are not spiritual natures. There is a constant undercurrent of moaning and whining of which the meditator is aware. His harmony with God is broken by this herd of men, from whom he is completely and irrevocably alienated. Although far from the only examples in this novel that demonstrate the lack of harmony or cohesion in its fictional world, they are enough to illustrate that the climate is one in which people would naturally long for, and strive for, something else, something that might be called wholeness.

Actually, the novel portrays examples of holiness as much as it does the search for wholeness, but because holiness is not the thrust of the topic at hand, I will not deal in depth with its appearance here. Suffice it to say that examples of holiness are offered in seven of the recognizable characters: the pilgrim, the girl oracle, the miraculous boy, the meditator/pope, the nomad/pope, the stigmatic nun and her niece. Holiness is nearly always associated with a physical symbol. For some of these figures, wholeness is also sought, which is not to say that holiness alone does not suffice. There are examples enough here (and in other of Luisa Josefina Hernández's novels) to dispel that notion. For the pilgrim and for the girl oracle, the journey ends with holiness. For the miracle-working boy, wholeness appears to have been bestowed upon him rather than sought, after the fashion noted by Carl Vaught, in which wholeness "sometimes comes, not as the result of human achievement, but as a gift that must simply be received" (xi).

The mother superior of the provinces is a holy woman, and is marked as such by having received the gift of the stigmata, or the wounds of Christ, in her own flesh. Both

doctors and theologians have examined her repeatedly and in detail, until they have determined her condition to be completely unexplainable by any other means, and the church has sent her on a lengthy journey throughout the known Christian world, charging her to display these marks of the grace of God, whether so requested or not, depending on the circumstances. The fact that she has received only three of the customary four wounds of the stigmata does not disturb them in the least. Three, they believe, are sufficient witness. The mother superior from the provinces has narrow, tunnel-like holes through both of her feet and in her left hand. The wounds are bloody, but do not actively bleed, nor do they cause her pain when she walks. This is not to say that she does not suffer from them, but rather, that she does not suffer in predictable ways or at foreseeable times. The absence of the fourth stigmata concerns her, and she believes she lacks it due either to being something she should not be, or to something missing within herself. Or perhaps she needs to fulfill some unknown condition. Four stigmata would not make her more holy than three, yet she feels an absence.

This missing element is revealed to be wholeness. Only when she and her estranged sister, the duchess, become one within the nun, does her condition begin to change. First, when the duchess touches the wound in her sister's hand, all three stigmata begin to bleed. Secondly, the nun recognizes that "no obtenía el cuarto estigma porque no amaba y jamás había amado a su hermana"<sup>106</sup> (109). The reason she has never loved her sister is that she has spent her adult life blaming her for having forced her into the convent at fifteen. Now she realizes that, rather than blame her for everything that's happened in her life, she should credit her for it: Credit her for the fame, admiration and distinction that has been hers; credit her for the opportunity to travel to fascinating places and be received by the royalty and nobility of many different kingdoms; credit her for the luxury of immersing herself in the study of theology and higher mathematics; credit her with

removing her from a life of suitors and marital obligations that held no attraction for her, and which has brought her sister no contentment. Finally, when she drapes herself in her sister's oriental silk and affixes her sister's jewels to herself, then hits her knees in a fifteen-hour prayer, she makes herself one in her heart and soul with her long-reviled sister. "Como ella soy ...," she prays, "Mi sangre es suya, mi piel, mis ojos, las palpitaciones de mi corazón. Suya soy y ella es mía y las dos somos vuestras. Miradnos ... miradnos e igualadnos por medio del amor. Amor, amor por ella, como si por mí fuera ..."107 (120).

Her sister, the duchess, is changed as well. She orders a new wardrobe of simpler, less extravagant garments, locks her jewels away for her daughters, switches her hair to a modest coiffure and forswears future adulterous affairs. It takes two to become one and the duchess is likewise on a journey to wholeness. The critical component for both these women is the interior. The stigmatic nun's exterior, physical journey is connected to a search for wholeness only insofar as it has brought her here, to the place where she must internally confront her lack of love for her sister. The duchess, clearly, does not traverse the exterior world, and thus, her search must be conducted entirely within herself and the small community at the castle.

The pairing of the duchess with the nun does not prevent also pairing the nun and the younger daughter in an equation of wholeness. Drawn to her younger niece from the moment she meets her, the stigmatic nun cannot help but be disappointed when she is reminded that it is the older daughter who is her namesake. Castigating herself for preferring one above the other, the nun does not realize that she is drawn to the girl because, spiritually, they are one. It is this fifteen-year-old adolescent who recognizes their joint condition after she has seen her aunt's wounds, but before her father has spoken the

words that will direct her vocation after his death. “Mi camino es el mismo pero haremos cosas muy diferentes. Mi camino es el mismo”<sup>108</sup> (106).

Several segments of Hernández’s novel can be aligned with Vaught’s and Thiessen’s concepts of wholeness, despite the absence of physical movement for any but the stigmatic nun. There is focus upon all three elements of the individual, the community and the divine, where the transformation of the ducal family is concerned. The family serves as the community in question and the presence of the stigmatic nun interjects the element of the divine, of the Mystery, into their midst. Because each one of the five characters undergoes a transformation of heart when alone, stress is also laid on the individual. It is their contact with the divine that prompts transformation, which allows them, in Thiessen’s terms, to return to a changed community, a community which now includes a vertical direction.

Because the picture here is one of integration rather than one of harmony or fulfillment, it would seem to be better represented by Thiessen’s model than by Vaught’s. The duke turns from atheism to Christianity, the duchess modifies her behavior drastically, the elder daughter is moved to enter the convent and the younger hears the voice of God, directing her future calling as His messenger. These interior changes bring shared understanding, but it is the understanding of the existence and the power of God, rather than a comprehension of the human. The duchess’s years of adultery are not instantly washed away for the duke, nor is her disdain for him obliterated in a moment. This community also suffers the loss of one of its members, when the elder daughter leaves with her aunt. It is not harmony that remains as the result of their interior journeys in the psychic wilderness, nor balance, but rather a dynamic tension around a center and a form of covenant between the members and God. Although Luisa Josefina Hernández has

illustrated her concept of wholeness as oneness here, Thiessen's model is also well-served by this portion of the novel.

The two chapters dealing with the eventual popes, Chapters Two and Seven, are likewise strongly infused with this idea of an individual becoming whole by merging with another person. In this case, the meditator encounters the nomad chief when his band of disciples camps near where the nomads have pitched their tents. A social conflict ensues between a group of unmarried women in the tribe and a group of unmarried men among the meditator's disciples. A consultation by the two with the wise woman brings them quickly to an understanding where the conflict is concerned, but, more importantly, the two men also discover their true identities and life paths. The wise woman warns them when they come to her, that they will learn more than they have asked to know. She throws her blue stones, shuffles her cards, from which they pick and she reveals to them a truth that will alter them both irreversibly: "Habéis partido en dos el destino de un solo hombre, erais uno solo y no lo sabíais, ahora sois dos y lo sabéis."<sup>109</sup> She continues, "Mientras estéis juntos sois un destino humano, en el momento de vuestra separación os dividiréis en dos partes .... No quiero decir con ello que tú serás malo y el otro bueno ..."<sup>110</sup> (61). In essence, the two men are twin sons of different mothers, and realize the truth of her words as they are spoken.

But the wise old woman shortly thereafter comes to realize that she has read the cards incorrectly. It is not that the two men were one and the same until, having dealt with the conflict between their two groups, they parted company. "Tu destino es uno con el de él, eres lo que él es, pero un destino se divide en pasado y futuro ..."<sup>111</sup> (80) she explains to the nomad chief. And, in addition, she foretells that the meditator will never find the sign he's looking for because he, himself, and his twin, the nomad chief, are the sign. A red star, invisible to most, blazes from the forehead of the meditator. The nomad chief had

noticed, but ignored this unusual physical attribute. Unbeknownst to him, his own forehead is likewise the source of red light, something noted by the meditator but uncommented upon. The nomad leaves his tribe in the care of the wise old woman and a new chief, the carpenter or, as he's also known, "the seventh man," and heads into the mountains to meditate, pausing briefly when he catches up to the meditator, now sans disciples, to share these new revelations.

Thus, for a time, both men practice meditation in the wilderness. The meditator, however, several times draws disciples to himself and makes, of a few, far more successful meditators than is he himself. His twin, in contrast, becomes a hermit, who builds a cover to shelter himself from the sun in the summer, who sleeps with a stone for a pillow, eats only what a generous villager provides and who, other than during the winter, has only his skin for cover. After many years, the meditator unknowingly fulfills the conditions, foretold by the stigmatic nun, by which the people should recognize their next pope. He suffers for ten years in this role, until released from it by the nun's niece, now holding a high position in the administration of convents. An insistent voice, she tells him, sent her to him with this message: "Dile que su gemelo ya cumplió y que puede, si quiere, cambiar de sitio con él, para terminar lo que tiene empezado y hacer lo que desea su corazón"<sup>112</sup> (228). The meditator/pope slips away almost immediately and homes in on the nomad as if pulled by a magnet.

This idea finds no welcome from the nomad, who instead suggests that, because they are one, both remain in the mountains as hermits. To this the meditator/pope rejoins, "No es lo mismo vivir en líneas paralelas que en una sola línea"<sup>113</sup> (229). In a marvelously comical scene that could have been written for the stage, the one man strips himself, one at a time, of a pile of ceremonial vestments which are, as they continue to argue, slowly put on by the other. As a single human trajectory, their past had been to be chiefs, of tribes

and disciples, but their future was to be hermit/popes. The nomad/pope hikes down the mountain to be hailed by the people of the city since he will fulfill the signs given them by the niece of the stigmatic nun. The meditator/pope remains behind so that his skin, too, may become like leather under the elements, where he will meditate on the face of God and offer guidance to the former soldier who brings him bread three times a week.

A fairly humorous variation on her theme of the wholeness of one, the tale also includes blatant references to Hernández's concept of wholeness as equilibrium. It is the wise old woman who tells the seventh man, the man who, unbeknownst to him, will become both a carpenter and the next chief of the tribe, "El universo tiene una balanza en la mano"<sup>114</sup> (70). She later reminds him of this, advising him, "[P]iensa en esa balanza diariamente"<sup>115</sup> (71). It is specifically said about the nomad chief himself, following the departure of the meditator and his disciples, but prior to the second interpretation of the wise old woman, that he "pensó en la balanza aquella ..."<sup>116</sup> (77). Here Hernández suggests that wholeness, broadly seen, is not integration, nor harmony, nor fulfillment, nor even a balance between opposing tensions. Wholeness, as an overarching concept, from her point of view, is a state of equilibrium, a balance between all elements.

Thiessen's conception cannot be smoothly applied to the portion of the novel that deals with the Nomad chief and the Meditator (Chapters II and VII). True, there is, for both of them, a separation phase, as the Meditator's disciples disappear and the Nomad chief voluntarily leaves his tribe. Both undergo a wilderness experience, the Nomad chief spending long years of contemplation as a hermit in the mountains, and the Meditator also spending some time alone in contemplation, before gathering to himself a new group of disciples. There is some question, however, as to whether or not these two men ever come into covenant community. It is possible to view the Meditator's situation as one that alternates between the wilderness and community as he moves between cycles of solitude

and various bands of adherents. Taken from an outside perspective, it might be thought that his years as pope constitute time spent in covenant community, since both he and the people are linked by Thiessen's necessary "integrating center." Yet, from the Meditator's point of view, the papacy is the most barren wilderness of all, and one in which he is unable to encounter God. "Me tormentan con homenajes y visitas, me consultan cosas sin sentido y por si fuera poco, tengo que tomar decisiones graves"<sup>117</sup> (225), he complains. Only as a signal of the end of his service in the office does he receive a word of prophecy, which sends him back to the wilderness of the mountain where he can meditate.

Why is it that neither groups of disciples nor the faithful in the city offer community to this man? It is because he always stands outside the group. As the perennial leader he is heard and responded to because his followers feel under duress to do so. His first group of disciples criticizes him regularly, but only behind his back, hoping, perhaps, that holiness will rub off on them.<sup>118</sup> The third component of true community, in Thiessen's view, is also not present, namely, liberation. The Meditator always feels chained to his followers, ensnared by his responsibility to them.

The Nomad chief, likewise, sits outside the larger community as the leader of his tribe, but he is also a member of a family, and the community of two he composes together with the wise woman. With the arrival of the Meditator, the latter becomes a community of three. These are the communities from which he separates himself in order to enter the wilderness. Later, as pope, there is also no indication that he has truly left the wilderness, nor is it clear whether or not He is able to experience God while pope. Yet he seems to have found the humor in the situation which evaded the other. When, on their deathbed, the Meditator asks how the time as pope has gone for him, the Nomad chief replies, "Los defraudé. ... Me encerré en este cuarto y me hice respetar. Hablaba media hora cada día y en forma muy tajante"<sup>119</sup> (249-50).

It is Vaught's model that is most easily applied here, due to his thesis that the quest for wholeness is a bi-directional, bi-temporal movement taken in recognition of a third direction and a third dimension. A journey toward the past and a journey toward the present is their combined destiny. Yet the wholeness model may only be lightly applied, as in most respects the focus here is on holiness. Vaught insists, for example, that all action and no speech degenerates the quest for wholeness. The two popes are a model of no speech and no action and have such tenuous experiences with community, an essential ingredient of wholeness according to both Thiessen and Vaught, that their story is not recognizable as one centered on either alienation or indivisibility. Theirs is primarily a picture of one possible example of the holiness path, one which touches on wholeness occasionally.

Hernández returns to the idea of wholeness as a balance between elements in Chapter IV. Run out of the second village after her mistreatment of the three children comes to the attention of the carpenter who serves as the chief there, the other woman abandons them completely and heads for the city. Attempting to avoid the most direct, and hence well-traveled, route between the village and the city, she stumbles on to the trail that leads to the cave where the pilgrim rests, perfumed and as fresh as a living being, beneath a protective cocoon of thorns. She is met by the guardian of the cave, and eventually recognizes in him the adulterous husband, the very shepherd who had inseminated her eight years earlier. The eight years of silence (one year of service for each goat, perhaps) have been spent in the tasks of gardener and guardian, bodyguard of the saint and her relics. The other woman has brought with her a suitcase full of gold, with which to purchase a business in the city — an inn, she imagines — and a heart full of hatred. Over the years, caring for her husband's two children from his first marriage, plus the one they had together, first while he lived and then after his death, the other woman has nursed and

nurtured the hate in her heart, and it has grown and flourished until it dominates her being. He is able to correctly identify that, had he lived, she would have also hated her dead child. She has been waiting for the pilgrim to reappear in the village and somehow rescue her, to change or restart her life. Now, matters have come to a head, she has taken her future into her own hands, and here is this man blocking her path.

The other woman does not believe the guardian of the cave when he explains to her that the path she is on leads nowhere. He intends his comment to be understood in both senses, but it is not so received by the woman. In order to change the topic from odium and direction, she asks him, accusingly, what he's doing here. His answer is cryptic: "Estoy aquí solo, pensando por los que no piensan, rezando por los que no rezan, haciendo aquello que hace falta. Es como la balanza donde pesas la lana. Yo estoy en un platillo y ustedes en otro ..." <sup>120</sup> (139). To this the woman first replies, "Pienso que ni en cien años podrías igualar el peso del rencor que llevo yo aquí adentro ..." <sup>121</sup> (139) and then throws a challenge up to him as she turns on her heel and leaves: "Si es cierto lo que dices, ámalos y trabaja como yo para devolverlos su dinero. Esa es la balanza y el platillo" <sup>122</sup> (140).

Hernández then illustrates the concept of equilibrium in precisely the manner suggested by the other woman. Descending into the village, the guardian of the cave is drafted, unresistingly, to become the guardian of the children abandoned by the woman he raped. But where he has earlier abandoned two children, his sons by the two different women, here are three children. The older of the two girls, elected of God to bear the message to all the villagers of the pilgrim's body preserved in the cave on the mountain, elected of God to instruct they build a chapel over the body, expires once she has fulfilled this task, and is buried near the saint. Known forever after as "la niña milagrosa" or what I call "the girl oracle," she embodies one of the seven pictures of holiness presented in this novel. In the sense of a balance, this dead holy child is the counterweight of the dead baby

he sired by the other woman. The guardian of the cave, then, while returning to his lair every night, actively raises two children for the next six years, never in that time suspecting that the wife he abandoned has also been raising not one, but two children. The second boy is a holy child, sired in accordance with a dream by the former soldier, and known by all in the village as “el niño milagroso,” or what I call “the miracle-working boy.” Truly, the present of the guardian of the cave precisely balances his past.

As previously stated, the equilibrium of Hernández is not the identical with the resolution of dualities. Here, one man is able to serve as counterweight to many others. It is an open question as to whether he balances them all at one time, or one after the other, depending upon how one understands the phrase “en otro.” It is also conceivable that there are those who pray, but do not think and those who think, but do not pray, yet they have not been assigned, it is not their fate, or destiny, to equalize each other. That task has been given to this man, and he fulfills it faithfully. He is not necessarily the opposite of the one who doesn’t pray in any other way. His task is to fill holes, not to serve as a foil.

The forsaken wife is balanced, in Hernández’s terms, by the other woman. Her public humiliation in the plaza is followed by her flight down the mountain, away from the side of the sleeping saint. Resisting this cosmic equilibrium, the forsaken wife at this moment lacks the integration necessary for wholeness. Thus begins her psychic wrestling match with her counterpart, some of which takes place in the waking dreams of her insomnia:

[D]e nuevo la tentación de compararse con aquella a quien todos nombraban con desprecio y que sin embargo, no era más que otra aldeana, más robusta que ella, un poco más alta, no mejor vestida, no más cuidadosa ni más limpia en su arreglo personal. Las dos tenían cabellos negros, la piel blanca, los ojos castaños, ¿tan diferente era ella de aquella otra mujer? Apretó los dientes: la

odiaba y se odiaba a sí misma.<sup>123</sup> (162)

On the one hand, the forsaken wife is able to see the other woman as her double. Not only have they shared the same man and each borne a son by him, but they are from the same village, of approximately the same age, and share very similar personal habits, both being well-groomed. In addition, both women are hard workers, and productive in their work. Yet the one is moral, in that she is legally married to the man in question, while the other has committed adultery, which makes her immoral. In addition, I would add, she has broken faith with the sisterhood of women by, in this case, borrowing (rather than stealing) the man belonging to another. She has transgressed both the overtly acknowledged and publicly unspoken bonds of belonging in her community and has also committed an offense against an individual.<sup>124</sup> The woman must struggle with the other, until her acknowledgment of her humanity outweighs her hatred of and repulsion toward the very human qualities within herself that led to the actions she condemns.

That the forsaken woman's tenuous hold on life and sanity is not broken, is due to her oneness with her child, a portion of wholeness within desperation. "[E]lla se sintió todopoderosa frente a su hijo, como si sola lo hubiera engendrado, como si el parto mismo fuera simbólico de la soledad en la creación, como si al fundirse el último grito de ella y el primero del niño se hubieran jurado asiduidades eternas, ligas indestructibles. Ruido, ruido hicieron los dos para luego permanecer callados, juntos, entremezclados"<sup>125</sup> (159). Later, the narrator records that "[I]as dos veces pensó en la muerte distraídamente, las dos veces sintió la cercanía del hijo, su hambre, su afán de vivir y de crecer"<sup>126</sup> (163). Perhaps from this point of view it is inevitable that the man in question should depart, as two, but not three, may combine to form the number of wholeness.

That "wholeness is a religious phenomenon and that the quest for wholeness finally brings us face to face with God" (Vaught, xi) is certainly played out in several chapters of

the novel. In every case, the representative of God is the pilgrim, the saint in the cave. For two of the characters, the forsaken wife and the returned soldier, God is also present in the prophetic dreams they receive and in the miracle-working boy they conceive as a result of acting upon these dreams. For the guardian of the cave, God is also at work through the girl oracle, who is briefly his ward. The pilgrim, in particular, is a representative of what he calls the “inherent duality” of God, who is “not only present to his creatures, but also transcendent” (86). Each of the four protagonists converse one-on-one with the pilgrim, who, it is carefully noted, is of flesh and blood. When hit by a cobblestone, she bleeds. As a result of the many miles walked and poor nutrition, she tires easily. Yet when she dies, her body is supernaturally both perfumed and preserved in its youth, free of decay, in an eternal state of suspended animation, much like Sleeping Beauty during the hundred-year spell. Human, yet beyond human. Earthly, yet of the spirit. She is symbolic of God’s relationship to the human being, a reminder of the presence of the divine, of the existence of an eternal dimension, a reflection of the ultimate.

The protagonists are indeed driven in two directions in their quest for wholeness, toward the past and toward the future, and always in light of the third direction just treated. But the two scenarios Vaught illustrates extensively are not precisely applicable to these characters, unless combined in a way that Vaught himself might not rule out. The two common trajectories this scholar proposes are a journey back to origins, culminating in either readoption or reinclusion into the community of the family, or a journey that begins with an encounter with God and generates a new community. It is the latter path that could describe the trajectory of the forsaken wife. The presence of the pilgrim in the plaza propels her situation to the forefront of attention and prompts the exit of both her husband and the other woman. Her own two individual conversations with the pilgrim, in her home and on the mountain, sow within her the seeds of a gradual receptivity to the transcendent

dimension of life. A new community is generated, both within the village, as the entire town assembles to listen to the pilgrim, and, slowly, under her roof, as she becomes the mother of the miracle-working boy.

Where the other woman is concerned, her journey — and hers is a physical journey — also begins with an encounter with God in His representative. In her case, the quest remains ever future-directed and she, herself, unfulfilled, as she moves from the first village to the next, then to the city where she opens a brothel. Her encounter with God is non-productive and does not result in either a return to origins or the generation of a new community. In fact, this is the element that is lacking in her journey overall. Wholeness is not possible without community, according to Vaught, and its absence is the reason for the fruitlessness of her quest. She could serve as an example of those who lose themselves in the larger world he refers to<sup>127</sup>, and could, as a result, abandon hope of finding wholeness.

On pages five and six, Vaught explicitly illustrates how the quest for wholeness may begin in the family, move out toward the future, return toward origins with the establishment of a new family and the joining of the two, then reach out toward the ultimate as the individual's sense of community grows. Inserting the encounter with God before the establishment of a new family, one has the model for the trajectory followed by both the returned soldier and the guardian of the cave. Tensions at home are such that both men feel driven "to seek fulfillment in a different context" (5), and thus separate themselves from the community of origin. The soldier, his term served, seeks his way in the greater communities found in a city, but only successfully inserts himself into self-destructive contexts. It is here he has his first encounter with God in the form of a dream. The dream sends him to the mountain, as it lies on his route homeward, and there he has a face-to-face meeting with a representative of the eternal. He continues back to the origins of his

existence as an individual (his mother, the village), adopts the family of his neighbor by marrying her, then unites the two families into an expanded community.

The guardian of the cave is likewise driven away from his roots toward the unknown future, by tensions he finds intolerable. He gets no further than the mountain before he comes up against the divine. Prolonged exposure to the transcendent, within the context of submersion in the individual, is necessary before he is able to reenter community and complete his quest for wholeness. The guardian's journey involves the recognition of his own particularity. As Vaught writes, the individual "often discovers that his [sic] own particularity is not always a positive aspect of his [sic] development. The characteristics that distinguish one individual from another often set him [sic] in radical contrast with others, and they sometimes serve to accentuate the fragmentation that compels him [sic] to undertake the quest for fulfillment" (26). The former goatherd is not really useless or goat-like, but different from the village norm for men. Set apart by his particularity, and outside the context in which his true calling could be identified, he performs poorly in the expected tasks. The teacher hidden inside has to be called to the surface by an extended, transformational encounter with the divine. His literal return to origins is as a visitor, not a settler, yet in serving as surrogate father to the abandoned children in the neighboring village, he enacts a return to origins in a parallel world.

In both cases, the paths these men follow can be seen either as taking them full circle, or as representing a retracing of steps. Carl Vaught, on the other hand, views the options available in terms of a mirror image. One journeys away from the family or one returns to the family in the quest for wholeness. But do these four characters emerge into wholeness, as Vaught defines it? Clearly, the other woman does not. The element of community is lacking in her life, and as it such precludes harmony and its secondary attribute, inclusive unity. She may have found fulfillment as an individual through

entrepreneurism, but the hatred she harbors will impede the development of self-acceptance. The forsaken wife has clearly found harmony and arrived at self-acceptance. At the end of Chapter VI she is able to expand her community to embrace that of her estranged husband, witness to the presence of a more inclusive unity. His response indicates that he, too, is able to embrace this quality, as he, too has come to accept himself. This man is one example of a fulfilled, self-actualized human being. He has a clearly identified vocation and a mission, and there is harmony between the individual, the corporate and the transcendent in his life. The soldier lacks this degree of harmony, as illustrated by the concerns he brings to the hermit twins on the mountain, but he radiates a calm acceptance of himself that includes the others it touches.

What is missing from the pages of these chapters, Vaught would point out, is not religion, but philosophy. There is no sign of a system of thought unless it be religious, and no evidence of reflection. The history of the pilgrim and the miracles that follow in her wake become the stories told in the villages. Thus, of the hearing and telling of stories there is plenty. Religion has already been mentioned. Direct experience is also present. But Vaught insists that, while wholeness “cannot be bounded by a completed system” (12), we also “cannot be whole unless we find a way of holding experience and reflection together” (8). If indeed “reflection stands at the end”<sup>128</sup> of the quest for wholeness, then regardless of whatever fulfillment or harmony is manifested in the lives of these characters, their journey is incomplete. Unable to move from revelation to intelligible structure, reflection is expressed only through the rites and rituals performed at the saint’s chapel. It is also present in the young monk and in his teachers at the monastery. Reflection, which would link or unify imagination, mystery and experience, is absent.

Thiessen’s view of wholeness, like Vaught’s, involves the triad of the individual, the community and the divine, all present, as has been noted, in *Los trovadores*. His

version of the direction taken by the journey, however, involves “a calling out of bondage, a sojourn in the wilderness, and a covenantal formation of a new community.”<sup>129</sup> The soldier is called out of the bondage of drink, sex and gambling onto the mountain (the symbol for wilderness, here), before being returned as a changed individual to a changed community. The guardian of the cave flees the bondage of conformity (the male role in a rural village) to the mountain where he remains for years, until he joins a new community as a changed person. The bondage from which the forsaken wife is called is that of self-pity, despair and hatred. Her brief sojourn on the mountain is followed by a return to the community she left, that she and they might grow together from their experience of contact with the divine. The other woman moves from bondage to mountain to bondage to mountain to continuing bondage. Although there is movement, she remains enslaved to resentment and hatred. She rejects the opportunity for a second contact with the transcendent, when she refuses to follow the guardian into the cave of the saint.

Thiessen’s emphasis on the necessity of a system of symbols, as preparation to contact with the divine, may provoke compassion in the reader for the other woman. Although most likely born in the village where she is first encountered by the reader, she seems to have no family. She is provided space to sleep in the home of people she works for as a domestic. Her parents have probably died, and even extended family seems wanting. Although raised there, without membership in a family, her membership in the community is tenuous. A woman remains in the home of her parents until marriage, as do most men, at this time. Lacking parents, such an individual would be taken in by relatives. No provision is made for the very few who fall outside this structure. Lacking love and any source of attachment, she refers to her impregnation by rape as receiving alms,<sup>130</sup> and she dotes on the baby. Unfortunately, she is not able to transfer the love she feels for this child either to the daughter she bears her husband in the second village, or to his two

children, but instead, she makes an idol of the memory of her dead child, preserving his layette like a relic, stroking it, collecting gold upon it. In Thiessen's terms, her Godspace has remained void, despite her encounter with the divine. She has made the mistake of waiting for the physical return of the pilgrim, rather than welcoming into her Godspace the eternal being who sent this messenger. Apparently, she does not embrace the symbolic system of the community that would not embrace her. The other woman's Godspace has therefore become filled with idols and self-nurture, with hatred and the love of luxury, and with the worship of the dead child.

Do the communities portrayed here meet Thiessen's definition of constructive communities? The answer is affirmative. They permit movement, in that there is some resettling between the two villages and the city. They are open systems, in that they can accept new members. Both the other woman and the guardian of the cave are welcomed from the outside into the second village. Perhaps because of its encounter with the divine, this village is able to accept outsiders, whereas the first village, prior to its contact with the pilgrim, was rejecting of those — the other woman and the guardian — who were different. Following their exposure to the messenger of God, the first village is shown as able to offer hospitality to strangers. When the guardian and his two charges venture in, seeking a place to purchase a meal, they are greeted charitably and directed without hesitation. Temporal stability is everywhere present, of course, due to the age in which the story is set. Lacking quick, efficient means of transportation and communication, people tend to stay where they are born. This permits a continuity of time beyond the existence of the self in buildings and trees, as well as in rituals and traditions. Both liberation and commitment are possible here, as is illustrated at the level of the family. The returned soldier never once neglects his responsibilities to his wife and her children, including that of showing affection, yet he has the freedom to bring food and water to the hermit thrice

weekly, sometimes spending hours with him. In addition, almost nightly, for twenty or thirty minutes, he gazes in from the street at the forsaken wife and the miracle-working boy he engendered. And clearly, God is the integrating center for both villages, as well as for the smaller, familial communities highlighted. The Roman Catholic Church provides the symbol system by which the villagers can understand both the message and the presence of the pilgrim. The covenant nature of each community is their common experience of the pilgrim. This is also what links the two villages into a larger whole. “[I]n order for an integrating center to develop, it must be reflected or embodied in tangible experiences in a community, or preferably, more than one community. This is only true, however, when the community itself relates to an integrating center beyond itself” (Thiessen 41). Every smaller group within these two villages shares the experience of the pilgrim’s visit in common. Children born since then know it in stories and in the miracles that followed. They see it in the son who returned to his mother, and in the woman who gave birth to the miracle-working boy. This concept of community, even of covenant community, embraces the city as well, as it is the seat of the pope. What signs and miracles are known in the city, what witness there is of God as an integrating center, is connected to the presence of the pope. In every case, God is present beyond the boundaries of the community, but also within them. As per the message of the pilgrim, “Dios existe entre nosotros ...”<sup>131</sup> (15).

Reflection also plays a part in Thiessen’s understanding of the journey toward wholeness, but its role is less critical than in Vaught’s conception. Thiessen maintains that awareness may come more through the hearing and reading of stories than through reflection and reason. Certainly the Roman Catholic faith and the Bible provide sufficient stories to overcome this lack of reflection. Indeed, as a result of their encounter with the transcendent interacting with their extant symbol system, new traditions and rituals surrounding the saint arise, to augment the old.

Given the integration of the individual, the community and the transcendent, Thiessen maintains, the resulting wholeness is marked by interpersonal security, vocation and truth, the by-products of which are “relational mental health and faith” (46). Are these present in the lives of the three protagonists who have achieved the proper integration? Given the Roman Catholic framework, their faith has been confirmed as truth; hence both are present. The forsaken wife is accepted and responded to, despite her status as a single mother, and she freely shares her miracle-working boy with all who request his services. The returned soldier likewise meets Thiessen’s criteria for interpersonal security, finding his liberating dimension in the time he spends with the hermit twins (sequentially) and in the freedom to gaze upon the miracle he doesn’t understand. The guardian is more than accepted by others; he is embraced, for he fills several needs. Yet his liberation is present, in that he returns nightly to his cave on the mountain and remains the guardian of the saint, now housed within a chapel.

Vocation is also satisfied in this setting. Although dialogue is little present among the protagonists, it is in dialogue with God and the community that vocation is encountered, as is clearly the case for the guardian. It is the carpenter who serves as the village chief, who identifies his talent for teaching as he watches the guardian interact with the children. Vocation arises from the needs of the community, and this community has many children, but no teacher, until the guardian is so identified. The forsaken wife, not surprisingly, given the setting, has known her vocation of mother from the start. It was never vocation that was lacking for her to experience wholeness. The returned soldier finds his calling not in the jack-of-all-trades he must become, in order to care for the family, but in his service to the hermit twins on the mountain. Without his ministering hand to bring them food, water, and a woolen garment in the winter, they would die. At

the same time, never consciously recognized by him, they also offer regular contact with the divine.

Perhaps it is Thiessen's picture of wholeness that best matches what Hernández has created. While many of the hallmarks of Vaught's system are present, one crucial element is missing. In the end, though, Hernández has put forth her own vision of what the quest for wholeness implies and what it means to be in a state of wholeness. It is, in essence, a third perspective on the question.

*Las fuentes ocultas: The Geometry of Wholeness in a Broken World*

Set in an unnamed tourist town located just a few hours' drive outside Mexico City, which José Anadón maintains, based on clues in the text, must be in either the state of Guerrero or the state of Morelos, the main action of this novel revolves around the once stately house that is slowly turned into a hotel, and is either home to or the hub for a large cast of characters. The sheer number of characters might suggest that this is another of Hernández's panoramic novels, but one soon discovers this is not so, as the cast is divided into a few protagonists, a number of supporting players and further background figures. The patriarch of sorts is fifty-year-old Don Erasmo (no last names are given, except to villains), a man who was born with his left leg six centimeters shorter than his right, and who wears a high heel on his left boot to accommodate his disability. Not even a good cobbler, however, can give the man an even gait, and his mode of movement is frequently referred to as either shuffling or uneven. He is fifteen years older than his brother, Roberto, who works in the bank in town and manages the affairs of an outlying ranch they own, while Erasmo runs the hotel and keeps the books for yet another business, a ceramics factory. Erasmo essentially raised his younger brother, as their parents were dead by the

time Roberto was two, and he continues to fret and worry over the younger man, much like a mother hen.

It is the 1960s and their world is a blending of the old and new. Their parents left them well provided for, and they are able to afford two telephones, one in the hotel office and the other in the kitchen. The home is wired and plumbed, and several of the guest rooms have individual bathrooms. But neither brother owns a car. They travel by bus when they go to Mexico City, by horse to keep an eye on the ranch or to visit acquaintances in the nearby village of Santos, and, when necessary, they rent one of the three cars available for hire in town, where the streets are paved. The house, The Colonial Family Hotel, is filled with the furniture and fixtures of by-gone days, and improvements and modernization is always done within the bounds of respect for the older architectural style. The foreigners who build their mansions on the hills just above the village live lavishly in comparison, while the residents of Santos make do with dirt paths (not even real streets) and lack larger farm animals, let alone a car or even a bicycle for transportation.

Fourteen years earlier, the brothers hired two sisters from Santos to maintain the household. Teresa, who is thirty, serves as the cook. Fat and ill-tempered, she is married to Ramón, ten years her junior, a sort of all-around handyman, who considers himself a ladies man and has three children by three different women to offer as proof. He also has a noticeable scar on his left calf, the reminder of a bullet fired by an angry brother of one of these women. Juliana, a year older than her sister, married Roberto several years before Ramón and Teresa wed. She carries out most of the other household duties, as well as doing the sewing and mending. They have one additional woman for household help and two male employees besides Ramón. Goyo is an older man, but still strong, and he does much of the outdoor work. Twelve-year-old Reinaldo serves as busboy and bellhop.

The hotel has some unusual guests. Elda, a widow who is roughly Erasmo's age, has rented the most remote of the outlying rooms for the past three years. Unsociable, she takes her meals in her rooms, remains closeted during the mornings, and she takes long, solitary strolls in the afternoon. She is from Mexico City and regularly receives books, art supplies and visitors from there. Juliana, who cleans the rooms, soon discovers she is a painter, and shows off the remarkable drawing of their town Elda gives her, a drawing in which the town, while recognizable as itself, is presented in the form of a ring, in which the buildings appear as precious stones. Erasmo, who is skilled at calligraphy and who draws posters in his room as a hobby, is jealous of her talent.

The six other remarkable persons who make this hotel their abode are not exactly guests, as they have merely continued on in their home after ceasing to live. The ghosts of Erasmo and Roberto's parents, Juan and Rosaura, and Juan's first wife, Felisa, maintain a presence in the house. Felisa is accompanied by three little girls dressed in white who often wear flower wreaths on their heads. The children are three times three, being once Juan and Rosaura's three daughters who died, one after the other, shortly after their births; once also Felisa's three children, the children she never bore, not in two marriages; and once also the three daughters that will eventually be born to Roberto and Juliana. The first two are called Felisa and Juliana, but the third will not be named until she is reborn, when she will be named after the saint assigned to that day.

Felisa and Rosaura interact, and the children either play alone together or accompany Felisa. Juan, however, remains at all times on the ground floor, far away from what is now room number seven, the room he had shared with both women, the room Erasmo inhabited until the house became a hotel, the room where Rosaura's clothing is preserved in mothballs in locked dressers and chests. While she was still alive, beginning in the 1920s, Rosaura had regularly seen Felisa's ghost, who had, over time, come to be

accompanied by first one, then two, then three little girls. Rosaura, who viewed herself as living in Felisa's house among borrowed things, felt comforted, rather than threatened, by her ghost, remarking that it was "si estuviera con mamá y sin mis hermanas ..."<sup>132</sup> (121), a rare privilege for a younger sister who was not the favorite. She accepted Juan's explanation of the origins of the children, never seeming to link them with her own daughters, whom she buried as babies.

The Spanish word "oculto" means hidden or concealed, but it is also related to the occult. Rumors that the house is haunted have long circulated in town, although few have ever seen the ghosts. Erasmo sees them often, and hears their voices as well. Roberto does not, and Erasmo takes pride in the success of his efforts to "teach" his younger brother not to believe in ghosts. Juliana saw them only once, while she was still single, after yielding to Teresa's pressures to call in a priest and have the house exorcised in the brothers' absence. After the priest had finished, the atmosphere in the house became tense, anxious, oppressed, and two days later, Juliana had seen an indistinct figure cross the patio and enter one of the rooms. She decided right then and there that the ghosts should stay, as they probably had no other place to go.

Goyo sees them as well, but Goyo also sees visions and regularly hears voices unaccompanied by visuals. The voices talk to him, either singularly or as a group. They sometimes direct his actions and at other times tell him what will happen in the future, although they do not always explain its significance. In town, Goyo is thought of as crazy, and is known to loudly broadcast every word these voices tell him to whoever will listen. At other times, he keeps resolutely to himself. Don Erasmo was averse to the idea of adding Goyo to their staff, first of all, because the man's personal hygiene is hopelessly lacking, but also because he was dubious about adding to the reputation of the hotel. Their

grandfather, Juan's father, had practiced spiritism, so the house had long been associated with the supernatural<sup>133</sup> and Erasmo is loathe to add to its fame.

The fourth person who sees the hotel ghosts is Señora Elda, and she paints them. It is said of Elda that her gift is "[p]intar el mundo como es y no como lo vemos. Su trabajo es la imitación de Dios"<sup>134</sup> (296). Like Erasmo and Goyo, she is able to see the ghosts whenever they are in the same space she is. They do not disconcert her any more than they frightened Rosaura or make Goyo anxious. Only Erasmo is uncomfortable with their presence. The ghosts both annoy and disconcert him, and he does not generally talk about them with anyone. Even Roberto has to ask, something he seldom dares to do.

What Erasmo knows about the ghosts, he learned from his father, who had it from the seer of his day, Don Hipólito, a man who had Goyo's gift, but who played a well-respected role in the community. It was he who explained to Juan that Felisa was unable to leave the house following her death because Juan was still married to her. It was he who identified the children as Juan and Rosaura's dead daughters, as well as the children that should have been born to Felisa. But it is Goyo who understands why some people can see them and others cannot. When Reinaldo asks Goyo why he doesn't teach him to see visions, the old man responds, "O te casas o ves visiones, ¿qué prefieres?"<sup>135</sup> (342). Only single persons can have direct contact with this spirit world, and more than that, only non-sexual persons. Goyo is essentially a monk, and remarks at one point on having made this choice. Erasmo, as a reaction partially to his lame leg and partially as a consequence of his childhood, has also closed off this side of himself. For Elda, the death of her husband freed her from sexuality, although not from seeing the sensual in forms and colors around her.

This equation can be extended to Juliana and Rosaura as well, although appearances may suggest otherwise. Juliana's one sighting of their spirit companions comes during that

brief period in which she has become a fully grown woman, yet is still chaste in both thought and behavior. She has no contact with these spirits, following the awakening of her sexual nature via her growing awareness of Don Roberto. Where Rosaura is concerned, a woman who is married to Don Juan both legally and in the eyes of the church, a woman who bears five children of this man, it is repeatedly stressed in the novel that in essence she is a girl who never grew up, a child bride who remains a child. Rosaura loves to play, and play and games are one pervasive metaphor in the novel. Sex may be just one more game for her, a form of play, rather than of passion.

Teresa and Ramón do not see the ghosts because they are intensely sexual beings. Reinaldo, who makes little effort to conceal his frequent masturbation and is therefore often the butt of jokes at the hotel, likewise cannot see them. The very chaste Dolores Anzures, the sixteen-year-old daughter of people who, as frequent guests of the hotel since it opened, have become friends, is trying to hold her budding sexuality in check. Her thirteen-year-old sister Mariela does not see them, because they are not visible to children who have not entered puberty, and, as Mariela once confesses to Don Erasmo, she hasn't even had her first period yet.

Obviously, these are not the same type of spirits present in *Almeida: Danzón*, where the spiritist couple worshipped otherworldly beings they referred to as "La Deidad," (the Deity). Whether or not Juan's father's belief and experience is similar to theirs remains unstated. But the ghosts may be related to the spirits of Doña Sinfo and Daniel, and to Don Ernesto's Tía Josefina, as the first two are seen only by Teresita, an asexual, elderly widow, and it is never specified that the latter is seen again by her nephew after his interest in Verenna Marie Star is aroused. Although the two fictional worlds are separate, they are not inconsistent in this respect.

The universe these characters inhabit is full of suffering, sadness and evil. There is family strife, children dying at birth, child abuse, murder, cruelty and poverty, among many other problems. Not all of the evil present is out in the open. As at the hotel, where many of the small fountains are hidden, either by leaves that have gradually covered them over the years or by virtue of their locations, what is hidden (“ocultas”) in the universe of this book refers not only to “fuentes” in its literal meaning of fountains, but to sources and origins (alternate meanings for the word) of many other types. Words, emotions, laughter, memories, suspicions, scars, deformities, clothing, incest, suicide, homosexuality, and bodies are all buried beneath an everyday veneer of routine, fear and a social code that relegates each person to his or her own business. “No es cosa nuestra — este era el dogma, la precaución llevada al extremo”<sup>136</sup> (206), or, as Erasmo tells his brother, “Cada quien tiene sus rincones oscuros”<sup>137</sup> (24).

Erasmo attempts to conceal his short leg with a six-centimeter heel and by talking to passersby on the street from behind the bottom half of a Dutch door. Ramón seeks to conceal his disfiguring scar by buying shoes and socks to cover it. Rosaura’s clothing and personal belongings are kept from sight via lock and key, a game in which the past is preserved, even as it is concealed. Siblings hide their laughter from each other, when to do otherwise would be cruel, or when they are embarrassed at their own behavior. Roberto tries to conceal his feelings for Ludmilla Brenner from his brother, and the episode (and perhaps the burden of keeping the secret) leaves him struggling with physical exhaustion and on the verge of mental illness for two years.

The sudden funeral of Señora Brenner, the senior female member of the German family who rents the brothers’ ranch, arouses suspicions. Although she was not well known by people in the town, never having learned to speak any language but German, the local women find the lack of ceremony upsetting. Her suicide via homemade arsenic

crackers remains hidden, as does the incest between her husband and their nineteen-year-old daughter, Ludmilla. It is the second instance of incest to be concealed, following that of a brother and sister who were part of the family that bought the brothers' hacienda, known as "La Luz" ("The Light"), years before. Brenner's suicide — he hangs himself from the rafters of the ranch house — is hard to conceal. His ranch hands and men from the mortuary, led by Erasmo, must cut him down, box him up and bury him beside his wife. Nevertheless, the incident is discussed in whispers, rather than openly, partly because of the speculations his own death casts on that of his wife, and on his relationship with his daughter.

Suspicious have not died down about the Brenner affair when there is speculation about Sampson, the gringo who is a naturalized citizen of Mexico and who lives in one of the hilltop mansions, and the only character, besides Brenner, who is referred to by last name alone, often without any courtesy title. This form of address marks them as double outsiders. Not only are they strangers to the healthy interconnections that link those associated with the hotel, but they are also literal and figurative foreign elements to the environment. Because they are, likewise, people of suspect character, they are never, unlike Brenner's wife, even referred to with a courtesy title of respect. Everyone calls Brenner's daughter, although equally German born, but of a more receptive character, by her first name. The two women, although alien to the locale, are at least deemed worthy of some courtesy, and even, in Ludmilla's case, affection.

Sampson is widely thought to be an alcoholic (although no one can say they have ever seen him drunk), a homosexual and a pedophile. Every weekend brings him cars full of visitors, always male and usually well to do. An eighteen-year-old boy, the "sexual toy" of a powerful Mexico City "sugar daddy" who is a friend of Sampson, is killed in a drunken automobile accident. At least, the evidence would lead one to this conclusion. At

the garage where Sampson is paying to have the car stored for several weeks, underneath the unnaturally clean car's floorboards, the employees find a pool of blood. Also, six men are seen to arrive in that car, but the townsfolk can only piece together the departure of three of them, then one more, and finally, a fifth. In addition, a Mexico City newspaper runs a story about a missing boy, whose parents know little more than that he had begun to receive expensive gifts, which he claimed to be buying with the wages from a job he could never prove he held. The boy is rumored to be buried inside the walls of Sampson's house. The truth, to which there are few witnesses, is that he is buried in the patio of the mansion, and the flowers that grow in this human fertilizer are the largest chrysanthemums their alcoholic owner has ever seen.

This is the first known cover-up, but not the first murder in this little town. The narrator speaks of “el caso relativamente frecuente de un asesinato”<sup>138</sup> (71), in which it is the custom to call the doctor to issue a death certificate. In such cases, “lo más fácil era que el asesino cambiara de pueblo y regresara tres o cuatro años después como si nada hubiera ocurrido”<sup>139</sup> (71). Who knows how many non-suspicious deaths, to which no doctor is summoned, conceal crimes.

Beatings are also not unusual. Spousal abuse is common, and the reader is made acquainted with the bruises on Sinfrosa, the corrupt older woman who works as Sampson's cook, after her brother beats her, as well as the welts and bruises on Reinaldo's body following a fight with his father, who beat him with a club. Erasmo, who hires the boy shortly after he runs away from home following the fight, reflects on the customs of his home town: “Bien sabía cómo se castigaba a los niños por esos rumbos y peores casos había visto”<sup>140</sup> (259). The bruises are hidden by clothing, where possible. For a woman like Sinfrosa, a scarf over the face may conceal lost teeth.

In short, it is a violent milieu and an unhappy one. The pace of life is slower than that normally associated with fragmentation, but the events that propelled the Western world into this condition have already occurred and have arguably had at least some effect on this town. The two world wars affected Mexico differently than Europe or the United States, in that the Mexican people did not serve as soldiers. The wars' primary effect on Mexico was to deposit a great many European immigrants on her shores, among which the Brenner family may be numbered.

The pace of change has certainly picked up over that of past centuries. Teresa identifies this as a problem: "Eso era lo malo: las diferencias y los cambios"<sup>141</sup> (18). And yet, as one sees in the hotel, modernity here seems to coexist with the past. Mechanization is a reality, but this is not a factory town. Other than the ceramics factory, no comparable industry is mentioned. Instead, this tourist town seems to have remained, as yet, filled with small shops, a local market and individual peddlers, such as the blacksmith, the auto repair shop and the woman who sells pork rinds door to door. The media is also only gradually becoming an assault, rather than a service. Residents may subscribe to the small local newspaper, or wait several days to receive a larger paper from Mexico City. As for movie theaters, the first one has just opened, and no mention is made of television. Telephones are almost luxuries and are used sparingly. In short, technology does not yet feel threatening.

Nor is religion under attack. The church is mentioned every time the village is described, as it is both an architectural and a social focal point. Roman Catholicism holds sway, with the narrator frequently mentioning that a character crosses him- or herself, or prays the rosary. There is a crucifix on the wall of every room in the hotel, and several characters speak of angels and the devil as part of their belief system. The great altar in the church is referred to with particular reverence, and several characters' prayers are quoted

verbatim. Catholic rituals are part of marriage, childbirth and burial. Religion is integrated into the culture and the lives within it. Neither Freudian nor Darwinian thought seems to have affected the dynamics of life in this small town, albeit so close to a major city.

One does see a very few examples here of the changing roles of women, however. Although many of the women portrayed are housewives or work as domestics, Sinforsosa is unmarried and self-supporting. Elda is also able to support herself, too, and her work is unrelated to houses or children. It is creative work, but as an artist, she is regarded with suspicion by many. Unlike Felisa, whose wealth was gained when she was widowed, Elda does not depend on the assets left her by her late husband. She is the only female character who is not under the domination of men. Neither Teresa's bad temper nor Sinforsosa's sandpapery nature proves sufficient as a tool of power in the struggle of women not to be subject to the men in their lives. Teresa's insults and complaints pass unheard by her husband, while Sinforsosa's brother beats her black and blue when he is angry. Women may be performing a greater variety of tasks than they have in the past, but the basic patriarchal dynamics between men and women remain unchanged in this setting.

Although for Teresa, delivering a message is referred to as "una de las múltiples cosas que lo ocupaban ..." <sup>142</sup> (204), and Juan comments that "los sucesos son dobles y múltiples y se repiten cada diez minutos ..." <sup>143</sup> (337), evidence of multiplicity is scarce. They live in a broken world, one in which happiness is not the norm, but it is not a world splintered, nor are these psyches fragmented according to the criteria presented by the scholars cited in Chapter One. Several of the characters experience isolation, and community is shaky at best, but the divisions here result in disharmony, rather than discontinuity. Enmity is sometimes present, as are discord and disunity, but there is also a noted stability, a connection between the four dimensions of time. And the promise of wholeness, at least in Hernández's terms, is held out by the end.

This does not, at first, appear to be the case, as the number three seems to figure so prominently and with such positive associations through much of the novel. The three little girls in white are described as “iguales”<sup>144</sup> (317) and as “querubines”<sup>145</sup> (327); Erasmo is baptized at three months old; Felisa’s two servants, Emerenciana and Paula, hoped to have three years without a new mistress; there are three doctors in town, and three rental cars; Elda remains at the hotel for three years; Juan climbs stairs three at a time; the hotel ghosts number six, which is two times three. Past, present and future are twice specifically linked (173, 325). Juliana gradually adapts to the change in her life, prompted by her employment at the hotel, by becoming one of three: “Esta era su casa y aquellos dos hombres eran algo suyo, más que sus padres, más que sus hermanos; le pertenecían hondamente y con eso bastaba, no era necesario preguntarse cómo ni por qué”<sup>146</sup> (244). And finally, Juan, Rosaura and Erasmo are referred to as a unit and as having experienced 15 (or five times three) very happy years together. “Fuimos muy felices los tres”<sup>147</sup> (190) remembers Erasmo. Shortly after his first son’s birth, Juan reflected, “Era un hombre de suerte; en diez meses se había hecho de dos compañías absorbentes y las dos le daban grandes satisfacciones”<sup>148</sup> (131-32).

Despite being specifically told in the text that there is a fundamental flaw in this triad of Juan-Rosaura-Erasmo<sup>149</sup>, the reader may well doubt the criticism, because of the happiness they enjoyed before Juan began to question the relationship. But the careful reader will note that the tripartite relationships presented are not always positive. Roberto, so long as he feels himself part of a romantic triangle involving both Ludmilla and Juliana, lingers on the brink of death. Sampson’s guests on the fatal weekend arrive as six, or two times three. The dead youth beneath the chrysanthemums is cursed in three languages, English, Spanish and Tagalog. And the final chapter makes it clear that triads are a roadblock to wholeness, regardless of how much happiness they may contain for some.

There may be unity between the members of a triad, but there can be no wholeness, since, for Hernández, wholeness is equated with equilibrium, not with integration or happiness.

When Juan, then forty, first marries seventeen-year-old Rosaura, the two of them actually form a triad. In a moment of reckless abandon he tells her, “[Y]o soy como tu padre y tu madre en una sola persona”<sup>150</sup> (117). With the birth of Erasmo, he relinquishes the maternal role to Rosaura, while remaining like a father to her, which is precisely what Don Hipólito understands as the root of the problem. Emotionally, Don Juan is committing incest when he sleeps with Rosaura, and the babies their relations produce are doomed to either die or be born deformed because of it. That their marriage has been sanctioned by church and state is irrelevant, because in his heart Juan regards Rosaura as his daughter. This is the story’s third example of an incestuous relationship, and it, too, proves destructive. Rosaura plays several roles for Juan, but how different they are than those enumerated in *Almeida: Danzón*. “Ella era su niña, su amor, su entretenimiento, su consuelo ...”<sup>151</sup> (141-42). Indeed, he speaks of her as one might a daughter, when he does not describe her as his lover. Unable to change the way he feels toward her when he is with her, and in despair at the death of the third daughter, a death for which he blames his feelings, Juan leaves Rosaura when he learns she is pregnant again, so that the baby will be born normal. And indeed, Roberto is a beautiful, perfect baby, and after his birth “Rosaura empezó a ponerse contenta porque otra vez habíamos tres en su cuarto ...”<sup>152</sup> (192). But her happiness, in Juan’s absence, does not last long. By Roberto’s second birthday, she is dead, allegedly due to sadness and confusion, and unexpected change. Although she contracted tuberculosis, it is understood that her emotional state had made her vulnerable to the disease.

At her death, a triad is formed again, as Juan, who has remained apart from Rosaura, reenters their lives. Both emotionally and in the roles they enact, Roberto is,

effectively, Erasmo's son and Juan's grandson. The latter, a broken man and aged beyond his years, never recovers from his guilt, first, for having made of his second marriage an incestuous relationship, and second, for his emotional cruelty in withdrawing his affection from his daughter/wife. He does not live many years longer, and literally leaves Erasmo to raise his younger brother, to serve as both father and mother to the child, as he himself once had to Rosaura.

The love and happiness that was shared in the father-daughter-grandson relationship of Juan-Rosaura-Erasmo is also pointedly referred to as unusual, implicitly unnatural: “[U]n amor extraño y con mal fin ... único, amor, extraño para siempre”<sup>153</sup> (272). What Erasmo later discovers is that his triangular relationship with his parents is also an entrapment. His continuing link to them prevents him from developing normal sexual feelings, and it ties them as ghosts to the house so long as he is alive. Addressing his mother's ghost as she stands behind him, Erasmo confesses, “Yo también me quedé niño, como tú. Rosaura, sé que estás allí porque no puedes dejarme y que mi padre tampoco puede irse porque aquí estamos nosotros dos. ... [Q]uédate conmigo hasta que llegue la hora de irme. Nos iremos los tres, no se te olvide”<sup>154</sup> (272-73). His hunch is later confirmed by Goyo, who tells him “La muchacha y el viejo se van cuando usted se vaya”<sup>155</sup> (295). Upon hearing these words, Erasmo turns pale and resigned. “El triángulo no se había roto; allí estaban ellos esperándolo para ir a reunirse en otras órbitas, para volverse una sola materia, inasible y amorosa”<sup>156</sup> (295-96).

Yet in the midst of dismay, Erasmo somehow senses that the goal is to become but one. As three, love is possible, and happiness known, but such is not wholeness, because on the human plane, from the perspective of Luisa Josefina Hernández, wholeness requires equilibrium and three will never balance. She does not seem to allow for the idea that one may serve as the fulcrum for the other two. In this novel, she also associates harmony

with wholeness. In prayer, Erasmo acknowledges that God places people into position, much as a player moves chess pieces, “para lograr, si es que eso era posible, una armonía humana”<sup>157</sup> (298). Elda is said to ‘embroider’ “figuras con armonía secreta”<sup>158</sup> (329) in her paintings. Dolores, Erasmo’s future bride, dreams of “el futuro armónico”<sup>159</sup> (321) as a married woman, and the narrator asserts that “la armonía nace sola ...”<sup>160</sup> (44). Harmony is the balance between the two that makes them one.

The *leitmotif* of geometric figures illustrates these relationships. Elda, who sees things as they are, “pinta con los ojos cerrados la geometría de la felicidad ...”<sup>161</sup> (318) which she senses around her later in her stay. She paints the town as a ring, a circle, an all-encompassing border containing a whole. Studying the town, Erasmo later admits that it is, indeed, a ring. Wedding rings are also important to the story, as four couples marry in these pages. But Elda’s afternoon walks through this town form polygons, a figure having three or more straight sides. Thus, some of Elda’s walks trace a triangular path. And the windows of her room are small triangles, divided by wooden frames. The triangle is also strongly associated with Rosaura. As quoted above, the relationship she has with Juan and Erasmo is categorized as triangular. And when the Anzures sisters dig through her clothing, they discover a skirt that has rose-colored silk triangles embroidered along the edge. As they continue to paw through these drawers, together with Juliana, the latter senses “una especie de electricidad sostenida entre ellas como si fueran las aristas de un triángulo especial donde se revolvían cosas diferentes a los planes del vestido ...”<sup>162</sup> (169). But when resolution comes in the final chapter, the celebratory dance across lawns and gardens takes the form of hexagons and pentagons. A hexagon has six sides and six angles, which — although six is two times three — when divided in two, yields two geometric figures of four sides and four angles each. A pentagon can be thought of as shaped like a house, and it is impossible to divide through the middle, when running a line

between two angles. While both of these figures can be subdivided into triangles, the emphasis here is on liberation from, or the transformation of, this three-sided figure.

As in Hernández's other novels, the double and the pair are also frequently mentioned. Geometrically, a line connects two points, and they remain in contact via the line. (A line can also be said to be composed of an infinite number of points, but for the purposes of this illustration, end points are assumed, with the line running between them.) Lines that connect three points form a triangle, of which, at any one time, only two points are in contact. In addition, the space between the three points forms a plane that separates. The picture is one of space and distance, of connection, but not of unity.

Hernández uses the metaphor of the double and the pair, when other words would more conventionally express certain ideas. The narrator describes Roberto as having "una idea doble" (100) and refers to Juliana's custom of continuing to address her husband as "Don Roberto" as "un tratamiento doble" (38). As we shall see, the Spanish language allows for wonderful word play where words containing "doble" (double) and "pareja" (pair, couple) are concerned. Both words also have meanings associated with games, particularly with card games, where both are terms for two of a kind. In addition, the stools that were made to match their game board are "de doble fondo," with a false bottom for storing the game pieces.<sup>163</sup>

Juliana works "lo doble de" Teresa, or, twice as much. Mariela has "doble vista," double vision. Clothing is folded, "doblado," and hemmed, "doblado." Juan feels himself estranged from women "capaces de desdoblar sus diferentes pliegues"<sup>164</sup> (117). Both Erasmo's foot and his gait are described as "dispareja" and "despareja," uneven, unmatching. A "pareja de Belgas" (Belgian couple) passes through the hotel. A group of insects is described as being "muy parejos," very much alike, and fingernails are cut

“parejitas,” even. There is also mention of searching for one’s mate (“buscará su pareja”) and the hotel is described as “aparejada,” prepared, or ready, to receive guests.

That these pairs are to form wholes is stressed in the last two chapters, which are also chronologically the last two installments of the story. When Roberto is caught up in a romantic triangle, it is Erasmo himself who insists, “De tres personas, más vale que dos sean felices”<sup>165</sup> (276). And it is also Erasmo, who by day fears himself ensnared in an eternal triangular relationship, but who by night dreams of its resolution: “Algún día el amor de los tres se convertirá en uno y el uno bien compuesto buscará su pareja”<sup>166</sup> (319).

He prays:

[N]o me hagas desaparecer desintegrado en mi sustancia tripartita. Hazme uno, uno solo, y dame compañera para ser finalmente dos en uno. Parece cosa de números y lo es. Las sumas y las restas escondidas de un compuesto algebraico; ignoro las fórmulas secretas pero busco la mía y ya la sé. Recuerda: de tres uno, de uno otro, para resultar dos y volverse uno.<sup>167</sup> (343)

In his dreams the stars fuse into one large, clean, clear point of light.

His wish is granted, although he is not yet aware of it. Erasmo will marry Dolores Anzures. The news of a wedding excites Rosaura. Juan senses her excitement and finally brings himself to ascend to the second story. He begs her forgiveness and obtains it for all eternity. He is still unhappy, until she points out that he has become nearly as young as she is, for she is seventeen again and he is now twenty, and the two of them run out of the hotel, across the town, and are carried by night into the church, where they again marry.<sup>168</sup> Erasmo’s dream stars are the joining of two constellations, Rosaura and Juan, into a display of one pure light, whose “other orbit” does not include him. Their union of wholeness changes three, the former triangle, into one, a spiritual and sexual union. This leaves one left over, Erasmo, who can join himself with another, Dolores, that these two

may also become a whole. His prayer is answered on the earthy plane, and also on the temporal, as even time is one in the final equation: “La casa tiembla y se siente aludida por la suma retrógrada y final; uno es el tiempo y uno el ensueño con que se disfraza”<sup>169</sup> (344).

The internal nature of the journey is illustrated by the confined spaces within which the action occurs and by the narrator’s ability to express the thoughts of various characters. In addition, the motif of “ventanas interiores” can apply to the characters as well as to rooms within the house. Whereas the ghost of Rosaura is unable to see Juan, because the room he haunts “no tiene ventanas interiores”<sup>170</sup> (334), Erasmo, in particular, needs Elda as a form of power tool by which to open “ventanas interiores” into his unconscious. Likewise, as Roberto struggles between life and death, in an illness that is connected more to emotions unexpressed than it is to germs or disease, Juliana serves as a “ventana interior” in that she alone brings some small portion of light into his soul. Physical movement is most notably seen in Ludmilla, who moves on to achieve economic independence as a merchant in Guadalajara.

There is little evidence of the physical quest envisioned by Vaught and Thiessen, yet there is plenty of movement within the bounded space of a hotel, a town, a village and the human mind. When sisters Teresa and Juliana leave their home in Santos to work for the two brothers at the hotel, they are moving away from their “fuentes ocultas,” their hidden origins, and toward the unknown. This proves most difficult at first for Juliana, who “extrañaba los olores de su casa, el contacto con sus hermanos menores, la presencia de sus padres ...”<sup>171</sup> (211). Yet it is she who also proves most successful at coming to terms with the outside world, from where she is later to reconnect with her origins. In complete contradiction of Vaught’s thesis, Juliana does not forfeit her particularity in separating herself from her blood relatives, to be joined by adoption into the family of

Roberto and Erasmo. Rather, in doing so, she establishes herself as an individual, separate from her sister Teresa, with whom she has always been identified.

The process occurs in a series of small steps over time, and Juliana is first conscious of a change taking place after she and Don Erasmo come to an agreement concerning the cleaning of his room. “[E]ra la primera muestra de confianza verdadera, la primera liga que su corazón hacía en aquella casa y por ello se sentía menos extraña, menos huérfana, menos hermana de Teresa”<sup>172</sup> (220). This form of adoption by strangers is perceived also by Erasmo, long before his brother and Juliana develop a romantic attachment. As he becomes conscious of what is happening, he asks himself, “¿[P]or qué ella? ¿por qué ella, de alguna manera, había entrado en la familia ...? Teresa no era de la familia ...”<sup>173</sup> (236). The definitive separation from her family of origin, from the sister together with whom she entered this house, will come during Roberto’s illness. Adopted into this family somehow, despite Erasmo’s efforts to maintain boundaries against the outside world, Juliana individuates, leading her, in a reversal of the pattern Vaught details, back toward her family of origin. It is by developing herself as a unique individual that Juliana is empowered to experience what Vaught identifies as “readoption by the ground of one’s existence” (48). The reader is informed that Juliana now “gozaba de cierta autoridad adquirida por su capacidad de proveer a las necesidades de la casa”<sup>174</sup> combined with “su seriedad para decidir asuntos de importancia y por la solidaridad que siempre había mostrado con su familia ...”<sup>175</sup> (226). This process is actually more akin to one of the transformative results of Thiessen’s wilderness experience than to either of Vaught’s outward or backward journeys. Juliana returns to her family transformed, and plays a key part in the slow renewing of this community.

In another reversal of Vaught’s understanding of the directionality of the journey toward wholeness, Erasmo’s encounter with God ends, rather than begins his search,

while the experience of a new concept of community begins it. Erasmo's quest is the mirror image of one of the two main search options proposed in *The Quest for Wholeness*. It is only as the man is opened to the community that has formed around him against his will, that he is prepared to encounter God before the high altar in the church, where he will be married finally, at fifty. Conversing with Elda, Erasmo asks her if she has been in his town's church yet. Her response startled him: "Sí. Allí está el mundo entero"<sup>176</sup> (307). Reflecting on her comment, Erasmo concludes she is correct. "Sí era el mundo entero. Tal vez haber ido a la iglesia bastaba para pagar el deber de la contemplación"<sup>177</sup> (307).

Philosopher Carl G. Vaught, whose 1982 book addresses the question of fulfillment in detail, has identified four elements as necessary components of the quest for wholeness: Art, philosophy, religion and direct experience. Although he consistently emphasizes art in the form of story-telling or the narrative, it is more present within these pages as painting. While it is true that episodes in their lives become stories and that the whole, taken together, is a work of fiction, i.e. a story, this novel is not a form of meta-narrative. It is not a story about stories, not writing that discusses writing, except as to compare writing unfavorably with painting. Mariela dismisses novels as unnecessary. "¿[P]ara qué leer eso? ¿No tenemos ojos?"<sup>178</sup> (156) When Roberto responds, "Hay cosas que pasan en otra parte o pasaron hace mucho tiempo y no puedes verlas," Mariela counters, "Ah. Esas son noticias o libros de historia; muy diferente"<sup>179</sup> (157). In contrast, it is Elda, the painter, who reproduces Creation, who "remeda con imágenes la actitud del Creador"<sup>180</sup> (299), "empleándose en la única imitación legítima y gloriosa"<sup>181</sup> (200).

Thus, the element of art is present in painting, and a second element, that of reflection, is engaged in by both Erasmo and Elda. Although neither character could be said to construct a philosophical system, both attempt mentally to make sense of their experiences within the context of their knowledge of the world and their religious beliefs.

Both seek to order their understanding through reflection, and it is this component that is the key to the openness Erasmo must allow, before wholeness can become assessable to him.

The remaining two elements, experience and religion, are also both present. The direct actions taken by the various characters are detailed in the plot, and, as noted, the religious element pervades the work. What Vaught refers to as “the mysterious aspects of experience” (31) are present, too, represented by the contacts several characters have with ghosts and voices. As actual as the real world, yet unexplainable in both scientific and religious terms, the ghosts ensure a necessary component of mystery. Both of the traps Vaught identifies are avoided. The quest for wholeness does not generate into pure action, nor into a striving for complete comprehension. Elda consciously rejects this temptation, expressing pity for the “gente que todo quiere entender”<sup>182</sup> (283).

Vaught identifies wholeness as a combination of fulfillment, unity (community) and finite self-acceptance (individuation). Clearly, at the end of the novel, both community and individuation are present in the protagonists. Those who were overly particularized have become part of a community. Those who were once homogenized, have developed unique identities. But what of fulfillment? One very traditional form of literature views marriage as both fulfillment and resolution, and this is present here in the ending. But the novel does not maintain that fulfillment inevitably follows legal union. Marriage is as often conflicted as consoling, a scene of suffering inflicted by the partners upon one another. Harmony and fulfillment may be said to be present for only three of the four focal couples. Nonetheless, the overall picture fulfills Vaught’s criteria for wholeness, as there are concrete examples of harmony, unity, fulfillment and self-acceptance.

The movement toward unity in this novel, and the developing picture of community, especially when measured against Walter Thiessen’s understanding of the

concept, results despite efforts against it. In Erasmo's world, strangers are entirely unwelcome, whether foreigners such as Brenner and Sampson, or Mexicans transplanted from other cities, along the lines of Doña Elda. He has his suspicions about the foreigners even before events prove them warranted. Ludmilla's "acento tan marcado y las palabras tan mal dichas"<sup>183</sup> are compared with those of "los indígenas que le enseñaron el español"<sup>184</sup> (50). Indians are one more group of people of whom Erasmo is suspicious. They are also outsiders, like the Germans, about whom Erasmo opines: "Esta gente que viene a meterse a los pueblos donde no nace y deja los lugares que le pertenecen, no es buena gente"<sup>185</sup> (93). Sampson, another foreigner, also comes in for a good verbal drubbing: "A Erasmo le disgustaba el solo recuerdo de que existía aquel hombre"<sup>186</sup> (29). Gringos in general disgust him. When he learns that Elda's twenty-year-old daughter is married to one, the first words out of his mouth are: "Peor. La va a pervertir"<sup>187</sup> (291). Sampson's Filipino servant also comes in for his share of abuse. When Roberto ventures that the man looks like a Mexican, Erasmo rebuts him: "No, hombre ... Es una especie de chino con alguna otra mezcla muy fea" (181). The narrator describes the man's name as unimportant, and it is unclear whether this aspersion is in the eyes of Sinforosa, who works with him, or the narrator, who recounts the conversation, or one of those who live at the hotel, to whom her comments are addressed.

Where Elda is concerned, Don Erasmo's imagination consistently assumes the worst and he interprets her actions in a negative manner. "[S]e encerrara en el peor cuarto para aparecerse por la tarde y dar una vuelta por el pueblo como si fuera suyo o más bien como si no fuera de nadie!"<sup>188</sup> (12). "Elda era una intrusa ..."<sup>189</sup> (12). "[C]uántas cosas quería compartir con ellos, todas compradas y pagadas con su dinero? ¿Por qué afiliarse a la organización de otros seres que nada tenían que ver con ella? ¿Quién le daba este amplísimo derecho de elección?"<sup>190</sup> (26-27). Mariela shares his feelings: "No es de aquí

ni viene de vacaciones. No me gusta”<sup>191</sup> (159). This stance is nothing personal. It is an extension of Erasmo’s attitude toward outsiders in general. When he finally succeeds in finding a buyer for the ranch, the narrator notes, “Erasmo se congratuló de todas estas medidas y especialmente de no haberle vendido su propiedad a un extranjero, ni siquiera a un hombre que viniera de México, a quien se vería obligado a darle informaciones y toda clase de consejos”<sup>192</sup> (195).

Erasmo’s attitude goes beyond prejudice toward foreigners and beyond the fear of strangers in general. The man is fifty years old and still living virtually self-imprisoned in a house to which his parents had withdrawn after his birth. This fear of community is his inheritance. Three months after Erasmo was born, Juan and Rosaura had him baptized in the church, but “no llamaron padrinos ni hicieron fiesta; no por vergüenza, ni por dolor mal manejados, sino por haberse convertido en una unidad tan cerrada que nada ni nadie podía intervenir y ser aceptado”<sup>193</sup> (132). Rosaura’s elderly cousin Clotilde was the only person outside their tight little group to have access to her, although it could not be said that the two women ever became friends. Clotilde played the role of a high-ranking servant in the household. According to Paula, “la casa estaba llena de fantasmas y ... sus habitantes no se juntaban con los otros porque sus tratos más familiares los llevaban con gente de otro mundo”<sup>194</sup> (213-14). Unfortunately, the situation was not remedied by the deaths of the older generation. Juan and Rosaura lingered on as “gente de otro mundo,”<sup>195</sup> and Erasmo and Roberto fail to develop meaningful ties outside the house. When Clotilde dies, they no longer acknowledge blood relationships with anyone in the town, including their first cousins.

The situation is acknowledged to be unhealthy, not only by the narrator’s comments about the exclusion of near relatives from their small circle of two, but also by Erasmo himself, in his conflicted reflection on the past. “Razón tenían sus padres cuando cerraron

el mundo como si fuera una puerta y se quedaron dentro del orden de su casa y de sus sentimientos; lo malo, lo detestable es que ese orden duró muchos años y no los suficientes, dato indicador de que era cosa ficticia ...”<sup>196</sup> (206).

The outside world, in the form of Brenner and Sampson, forces Erasmo to step beyond the boundaries of his artificial planet. While he thinks he is protecting Roberto from the world, the truth is the reverse. Until he grows sickened in spirit by what the world has shown him, Roberto’s activity outside the house is what allows Erasmo to remain within its borders. But with Roberto wasting away in bed, responsibility for the ranch drags Erasmo into the world. Responsibility it is, as well, that transports him to Sampson’s mansion, the responsibility that every adult holds, where any child is concerned, to protect that child from evil.

The outside world also intrudes into this small nation of two, seemingly by Erasmo’s own actions, as well as those of his brother. Erasmo hires Juliana and Teresa to work for them after Clotilde’s death. He also hires Ramón on what is supposed to be a temporary basis. He offers Reinaldo employment as sanctuary. Roberto brings Goyo into their establishment. Then, because Erasmo and Ramón do so much work on the house, it begins to seem more like a hotel than a house, and this older brother, who so values those feelings of security and stability offered by high walls, believes it his own idea that it should become a hotel. Hernández, however, to a smaller degree than in the novel *Almeida: Danzón*, allows that the house itself has played a part in these changes. “La casa se sentía cansada de los pasos de las mismas gentes a las mismas horas, como si estuviera entumecida y deseara ser transitada por muchos seres humanos, descubierta, sacudida, la casa deseaba vivir independientemente de ellos ...”<sup>197</sup> (287). The house brings Elda to them, as a guest, this time, rather than as a servant. And once the house has opened its doors to the world, the elements of community are in place.

Community, so necessary to wholeness for both Thiessen and Vaught, and essential also to the broader view of wholeness for Hernández, forms around the two men, overlapping, then encompassing their little enclave of two, and expanding until, with its guidance, Erasmo can reach for the stars. This is a journey in which the call from bondage is a call out of isolation, and the sojourn in the wilderness, a series of intricate human dealings. This is the reverse of the respective settings Walter Thiessen describes when explaining his understanding of the three-part journey to wholeness. The wilderness, however, “is the place where God reveals something new” (69), he writes, and this description accurately reflects Erasmo’s experience in the wilderness of humanity. In addition, Thiessen states, “One goes to the wilderness not to be alone, but to learn dependence on God” (97). Although one normally does encounter solitude there, such is not the purpose of the wilderness experience. Erasmo needs to counter a constricting dependence on himself with the openness and release to be found when allowing God to act as an integrating center. The community from which he separates is a closed system, one limited to three members, first himself and his two parents, then himself, Roberto and, to a lesser degree, Clotilde. The community he joins, in his new awareness, is an open system, if grudgingly so, composed of all of the permanent residents of the hotel and the hotel guests. From this, he will also form a new marital community, and, in addition, there is a sense now in which he is also part of the town where he lives, in ways he was not in the past.

This is a very different path than Juliana’s, in that she separates from the community of her family and the marketplace, to tread the wilderness ways of this closed household, and when she returns to her family, she is changed, she is renewed and becomes a catalyst for change within both her family and the community forming at the hotel. Elda’s lengthy stay at the hotel is, in essence, her own sojourn in the wilderness.

She has retreated from the noise and demands of Mexico City and lives in semi-solitude here, where God reveals to her the true lines, forms and colors of the world around her, and slowly begins to heal her heart of the wounds of her marriage.

For Juan, Rosaura and Felisa, their time in a no-man's land between the spirit world and the human world can be likened to a wilderness experience. This is not even purgatory, and they are trapped souls, dependent on others' wholeness journeys to free them. Theirs is not the same journey as that made by humans, but can be seen as analogous up to a point. Freed from the bondage of human life, they wander in the shadows between dimensions until loosed from their binding ties, at which time they may continue on to the purely spiritual plane of existence. Exposing the community of three (Juan-Rosaura-Erasmo) for what it is, not wholeness, but, in Thiessen's terms, an idol, that is, a force demanding sole loyalty and indisputable commitment, grants liberation to every one of them.

Indeed, truth does come through the stranger in this setting. Although it is not truly a place of hospitality, and is certainly more suspicious towards than welcoming of strangers into its midst, Elda is allowed beyond the borders of this grouping. To Erasmo, once he can seek her out and listen to what she has to say, comes truth. True knowledge affords him self knowledge, and he is able to dispense with his substitute art-form of poster-making that, in Thiessen's terms, has been an attempt at self-nurture while hiding himself from the world and God.

Many of Thiessen's paradigms for wholeness are met. "[C]ommunities," he writes in the Abstract, "are necessary to provide symbol systems and narratives with which to encounter God and embody that security. They are also necessary to provide truth that counters inner illusions and to provide the setting where vocation, a secondary motivation, is discovered and exercised." Symbol systems are only faintly present in *Las fuentes*

*ocultas*, in Catholic rituals and family customs that center around games and play. Narratives, where they do not exist, are formed. The episode of the gringo and his chrysanthemums becomes part of the narrative that sustains the group at the Colonial Family Hotel, as does the Brenner episode, the heroic rescue of Reinaldo and the tales associated with the haunted mansion. The truth that counters illusions is certainly present, as witnessed by Erasmo's growing understanding that one, not three, is the number of wholeness. With the exception of Elda, vocation in the most idealistic sense is not strongly portrayed here. It is, however, witnessed within Thiessen's context, namely, that one's vocation emerges in response to the needs of the community, and in the context of "a corporate vocation with which the member identifies" (63), in this case, the running of a hotel. Thus, Teresa cooks, Juliana provides maid service, Erasmo checks guests in and out and keeps the accounts, Goyo handles gardening and landscaping chores, and Reinaldo serves as bellhop. The division of duties has grown out of both the needs of the community and the talents of the individual members.

In addition, Thiessen has identified several other aspects of community that may be witnessed in this setting. By his definition, this form of social grouping entails "any relationship or system of relationships that has a somewhat distinct identity and/or boundary and relative temporal stability. This stability implies that there is, acknowledged or unacknowledged, at least a minimal sense of commitment to the community" (8). The small society at the hotel possesses a distinct identity or boundary, as expressed in the discussion of vocation. Likewise, the sense of stability is present, but not rigid, and provides a sense of security in that it offers recognition, receptivity and liberation.

What is in doubt is the extent that the divine serves as an integrating center for the community as a group, despite the fact that there is evidence of God's central (in the sense of rooted, fundamental) place in the lives of each individual. They neither worship together

nor discuss their personal religious beliefs. In this sense, using Thiessen's terminology, their Godspace as a community may be narrow or "exemplify less wholeness in life" than it is possible to attain, but they also have "the advantage of God working dynamically within" (47) to expand it. As Juan repeats endlessly, following the infant Roberto's safe delivery, "¡Dios mío, tú eres la resurrección y la vida!"<sup>198</sup> (192). The visible center of this community is the hotel, but the interior center may well be God.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Emeritus.

<sup>2</sup> National Autonomous University of Mexico.

<sup>3</sup> Quemain, 253.

<sup>4</sup> They request the work, give her the theme, the number of characters and their characteristics, she evaluates them and writes works that we can qualify as exclusive and proportional, as if she were a tailor.

<sup>5</sup> [T]hey haven't given it the recognition it deserves.

<sup>6</sup> *The Plaza of Puerto Santo*.

<sup>7</sup> *The Secret Anger*.

<sup>8</sup> *The Exquisite Evening*.

<sup>9</sup> There are novels that I've written for the sheer entertainment of experimentation.

<sup>10</sup> *The Hidden Fountains*.

<sup>11</sup> *Nostalgia for Troy*.

<sup>12</sup> *The Troubadours*.

<sup>13</sup> *The Memory of Amadís*.

<sup>14</sup> *The Place Where the Grass Grows*.

<sup>15</sup> Cohn 14.

<sup>16</sup> *The First Battle*.

<sup>17</sup> In an interview with Grace M. Bearse in 1981, Hernández acknowledged that this novel was reflective of her experience of Cuba in 1963. She admits to Bearse, "It is not the same now as it was then" (302).

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- <sup>18</sup> This title is less easily translated than the others. *Almeida* is the name of a neighborhood and *Danzón* is a type of traditional dance associated with popular neighborhoods in the first decades of the twentieth century.
- <sup>19</sup> *Letter off/from/on Underwater Navigation.*
- <sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Hernández directly contradicts this portrait in *Las fuentes ocultas*, in which the long-term guest of the hotel, along with two girls who repeatedly stay there, all become members of the community that centers around the lodge.
- <sup>21</sup> *The Valley We Choose/Chose.*
- <sup>22</sup> [T]he teachers.
- <sup>23</sup> He writes it, but I understand it — . The verb “conocer” here means “to know” in the sense of knowing a person or place, or of knowing a literary passage by heart.
- <sup>24</sup> [H]e thinks about poetry and she thinks about him ....
- <sup>25</sup> Rutila was also his daughter. ... Also his mother, his lover, his servant, his companion.
- <sup>26</sup> I read the books he mentioned, repeated his opinions, copied his attitudes and words.
- <sup>27</sup> [P]earls of the conjugal intellect ... [that] need to be hoarded.
- <sup>28</sup> [O]ne sole admiration was enough for him, the apprenticeship of one sole advanced student, the adoration of one sole person.
- <sup>29</sup> Who will tell her, you or I?
- <sup>30</sup> Better the two of us together.
- <sup>31</sup> I don't want to leave you alone ... let it happen to us both.
- <sup>32</sup> “Blemish” or “stain.”
- <sup>33</sup> “Brute,” “beast” or “idiot.”
- <sup>34</sup> Wherever I look, I see double. Three times double ....
- <sup>35</sup> First let's give thanks to God for having conferred, on us, double what others hope for.
- <sup>36</sup> Justina is always happy.
- <sup>37</sup> [S]he's thinking so much about the wonder of double birth ....
- <sup>38</sup> “Faces doubled” or “double faces,” in the sense of duplicate faces.
- <sup>39</sup> [B]ad words.
- <sup>40</sup> [S]omething had occurred between them, a total complicity, as if through frequenting spiritist ideas they had ended up adding up to one sole being.
- <sup>41</sup> They nourished each other.
- <sup>42</sup> [N]urse ... accomplice ... associate ... acolyte.
- <sup>43</sup> [S]o different from Leona ... an intelligent man, cultivated, a decent chap.

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- 44 [T]he Deity.
- 45 God.
- 46 It's not like it was so many; I have six, too.
- 47 But one at a time.
- 48 Do you think that Justina might have two wombs? Does that ever happen?
- 49 [O]ne after the other, as if they were turkeys.
- 50 He is just one among many ....
- 51 [T]hat's why they were a single person and not two, like most human beings.
- 52 If we're one, you must know. If you don't know, we aren't one.
- 53 Paulo had not for a moment thought that he wouldn't go where his brother went, even if that were to jail, nor had Pastor [thought otherwise].
- 54 If you do that, you're bad, too.
- 55 Well yeah, but it doesn't matter. That's why you're here. You're good.
- 56 How long, how many days and nights would he live sharing the secrets and the destiny of his brother?
- 57 You aren't good any more.
- 58 No, I'm bad now, just like you.
- 59 You don't just turn bad, even if you want to. It isn't possible. I know from experience.
- 60 [S]he made the proposition in plural ....
- 61 The general appearance was patched, improvised, but not necessarily fragile, with something comic and impudent about it, nothing repellent, for sure.
- 62 [C]onsidering them one of the great dangers to the integrity of the aged.
- 63 "Usted" is the Spanish second person singular formal, the plural being "Ustedes."
- 64 Literally meaning "Little Teresa." The "ita/ito" and "illa/illo" suffixes also connote endearment.
- 65 Literally, "[I]t's horrible to be accompanied" in the sense of "to be tied to a companion."
- 66 [C]onsidered her marriage a success: There had been loyalty and decency between herself and her husband, a good relationship.
- 67 Those who make us start to lose the memory of our marriage.
- 68 I gave birth to a son a long time ago, and now the result is that I have two servants ....
- 69 [B]irth certificate.
- 70 [B]oth of them innate, via a universal law of equilibrium.
- 71 No one loved her and she didn't love anyone. That was her code and she ignored it ....

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- 72 If they asked us who we are we could easily tell them: Widows, pensioners. Young people give us something, my children to me and your nephews to you. That's clear, right? If they asked her the same thing, she would keep quiet.
- 73 Indian, in the sense of having no Spanish blood. It is a pejorative term.
- 74 She felt like an Indian in a family that no doubt was no ethnically different than her, but in which she didn't see any similarity to her own.
- 75 [T]hat during the punishments and events of her only trip, Manuela has lost sight of the notion of what a couple and a family is.
- 76 [A] frantic hatred of the institution of the family.
- 77 [E]ach was one end of the same skein. These two foreigners, forgotten by their own cultures, once nomads, now established; these two on the margins of this inconceivable neighboring world. These two with their heads full of a different system of symbols; their own languages. These two artists, these two in love with the beauty created by their hands; these two capable of weaving and embroidering existence. Some day they would recognize each other, and could at last locate the mirror that completely reflected them.
- 78 Estela and you are like each other in just one way. ... You can't stand the idea of marrying for love. It has to be for money.
- 79 [S]avage and primitive.
- 80 [E]mpelled by their couplings more than by themselves ...” “Pareja” translates as “pair,” “couple” or “partner.”
- 81 [A] fig tree pierced by a stone.
- 82 [B]eing married is a good excuse for not getting married again.
- 83 [T]hose two women are the same.
- 84 Elodia ... so horrible but so pretty [and] Justina so aged but so agreeable... The only difference is style. The adjective “estropeada” is used here in the sense of prematurely aged or worn.
- 85 [R]econstructing the tale of Ramón from another point of view. ... Do you realize that until now we've had it all backwards?
- 86 That's why, when two people fight with each other, two stories exist, instead of the usual one. To agree is to live but one version of life.
- 87 Everything in this world has two faces. There are two truths.
- 88 Theirs and ours.
- 89 [V]ery few human beings have the opportunity to do that. But even fewer found happiness while young, like Gervasio and her.
- 90 [C]rossing over/passing through the circles and triangles of an astrological drawing.
- 91 Hilerio was good for nothing because he, Asunción, was good for everything. It could be ... the Law of Equilibrium.

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92 [A]n unknown variety.

93 [B]rotherly and fatherly.

94 [T]o conquer.

95 [P]owerful.

96 [O]wner.

97 Nothing right now.

98 María felt herself divided. There were two Marías instead of one; one that lived in the room with Roque and this other one, the one that converted herself into Sinforosa and gave herself over to the death of her son. The two women looked at each other as if through sea mists, in the midst of a dense understanding. María did not abandon the boy. Sinforosa did not give herself to a small child alien to her blood. It was a transformation that united them, a single maternal power, with two bodies, more than as if they were mother and daughter, like a tangible abstraction for this time and space. María didn't touch her son because she was touching him. He vibrated in Sinforosa's arms as if he were in her own arms. She had split herself, out of love and sadness.

99 You are undoing what your mother did: She wanted to protect María so she wouldn't suffer so much ... This is their business, not yours.

100 Didn't you see them go by?

101 I didn't see anyone.

102 [M]irror of the authentic Heavenly Way.

103 [May] your God be converted into my God....

104 I want for nothing because I've already had everything; everything, except the act of death—. Thank you, my God ... Bring me death whenever you want, since this is the only one of your gifts I have not yet enjoyed.

105 [K]new the wishes and customs of the males in the house and satisfied them exactly.

106 [S]he didn't obtain the fourth stigmata because she didn't love –and had never loved– her sister.

107 I'm just like her... My blood is hers, my skin, my eyes, the palpitations of my heart. I am yours and she is mine and the two of us are yours. Look at us ... look at us and make us equal through the medium of love. Love, love her, as if she were me....

108 My path is the same, but we will do very different things. My path is the same [as hers].

109 You have split the destiny of one single man in two. You were a single being and didn't know it. Now you are two and you do know it. [The verb "partir" here has the meaning of "to share" as well as that of "to split" or "to divide," and should be understood in both senses.]

110 While you are together, you are one human destiny. At the moment of your separation, you will divide yourselves into two parts. ... I don't mean, by this, that one of you will

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be bad and the other good .... [The Spanish word “destino” can be translated as either “fate” or “destiny,” which, in English, are not always identical.]

111 Your destiny is one with his, but a destiny is divided into past and future.

112 Tell him that his twin has carried [it] out and may, if he wants, trade places with him, in order to finish what he has begun, and to do what his heart desires. [The verb “cumplir” means “to comply with,” “to fulfill” or “to carry something out.” In Spanish, it may be used unspecifically, as it is here. The sense is that of having finished doing that which needed to be done, or is needed to occur. Also, the word used here for twin, “gemelo” is better translated as “identical twin,” as opposed to the noun “cuate,” meaning “fraternal twin.” The choice of noun reinforces the notion that the two men are one.]

113 It’s not the same to live along parallel lines as [to live] in one single line.

114 The universe holds a balance in its hand. [The Spanish word for what is usually called “scales” in English, as in “the scales of justice,” is “balanza” and is necessarily translated here as “balance.”]

115 [T]hink about this balance every day.

116 [T]hought about that balance....

117 They torment me with homage and visits, they consult me about senseless things and, as if that weren’t enough, I have to make serious decisions.

118 Hernández does have the guardian of the cave advise the girl in his charge that “La santidad es un contagio.” [“Holiness is contagious.”] This is not to claim this for a fact, under the conditions of this fictional world, but to illustrate that such was a common belief among the people.

119 I deceived them. I locked myself in this room and made them respect me. I spoke, half an hour every day, in a very emphatic way.

120 I’m alone here, thinking for those who don’t think, praying for those who don’t pray, doing whatever is lacking. It’s like the balance where you weigh the wool. I’m in one saucer and you all are in the other. [It would also be possible to translate “en otro” here as “in another.”]

121 I don’t think you could balance the weight of my rancor if you tried for a hundred years.

122 If what you say is certain, go love them and work, like I did, to get them their money back. That is the balance and the saucer! [The “saucer” is, of course, one of the two metal plates that hang from the balance/scales and hold the items being weighed.]

123 [O]nce again, the temptation to compare herself with that one who everybody referred to with contempt and who, nevertheless, was nothing more than another village woman, more robust than herself, a little taller, no better dressed, no more careful, nor cleaner in her person. Both of them had black hair, white skin, chestnut eyes. Was she so different from the other woman? She clenched her teeth: She hated her and she hated herself.

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- 124 The goatherd is equally guilty of moral trespass but, in this predominantly patriarchal society, is not made as culpable as the woman.
- 125 [S]he felt all-powerful before her son, as if she alone had begotten him, as if the birth itself were symbolic of the solitude of creation, as if in the merging of her last cry and the boy's first one, they had sworn eternal devotion, indestructible ties. Noise, they both made noise, so they could later remain quiet, together, intertwined.
- 126 [t]he two times she thought distractedly about death, those two times she sensed the nearness of her son, his hunger, his eagerness to live and to grow.
- 127 Vaught 3.
- 128 Vaught 16.
- 129 Thiessen Abstract
- 130 She refers to the goatherd as "Uno que me hizo una limosna" (16). I have translated the word "limosna" as "alms" to try to avoid the pejorative sense the word often has in English. One gives a "limosna" to beggars and hobos, thus, it might be referred to as a "handout," with all of its derogatory connotations. But in Latin America and in centuries past, one also gave a "limosna" to pilgrims, to wandering monks, such as those of the Franciscan order, among whom one might encounter a saint or a holy person.
- 131 God exists among us.
- 132 [A]s if I were with Mother, without my sisters ....
- 133 Interestingly, while Juan accepted the idea of the presence of spirits as something completely normal, he himself never saw one during his lifetime.
- 134 To paint the world as it is and not how we see it. Her work is the imitation of God.
- 135 "Either you marry or you see visions. Which would you prefer?"
- 136 It isn't our business —this was the dogma, the precaution taken to extremes.
- 137 Everyone has their dark corners.
- 138 [T]he relatively frequent case of a murder.
- 139 [I]t was easiest if the murderer changed towns and returned three or four years later as if nothing had happened.
- 140 He knew well how they punished children around these parts and had seen worse cases than this.
- 141 That was what was bad: the differences and changes.
- 142 [O]ne of the multiple things that concerned her ....
- 143 [T]he things that happen are doubles and multiples and repeat themselves every ten minutes ....
- 144 [E]qual.
- 145 [C]herubs.

- 
- 146 This was her home and those two men were hers, more than her parents were, more than her siblings were. They belonged profoundly to her and this was enough. It was unnecessary to ask why.
- 147 We were very happy.
- 148 He was a lucky man; in 10 months he had made for himself two absorbing companions, and the two of them gave him great satisfaction.
- 149 This recalls the idea of “building a cult of three” presented by Gerlind Reinshagen in *Am großen Stern*.
- 150 I’m like your father and your mother in a single person.
- 151 She was his little girl, his lover, his entertainment, his consolation.
- 152 Rosaura began to become content, because once again there were three of them in her room.
- 153 [A] strange love, with a bad end ... unique, love, forever strange.
- 154 I’ve also remained a child, like you. Rosaura, I know that you’re hear because you can’t leave me and that my father also can’t go on because the two of us are here ... stay with me until my hour comes. We three will go on, don’t you forget.
- 155 The girl and the old man will leave when you leave.
- 156 The triangle hadn’t broken. They were out there waiting for him to reunite in other orbits, to become one single material, unfathomable and loving.
- 157 [I]n order to achieve, if something like that were possible, human harmony.
- 158 [F]igures with a secret harmony.
- 159 [A] harmonious future.
- 160 [H]armony is born one. [This can also be translated, “Harmony is born alone.”]
- 161 [P]aints, with her eyes closed, the geometry of happiness ....
- 162 [A] sort of electricity sustained between them as if they were the edges of a special triangle where different things revolved around the fabric of the dress .... [The word “arista” means the edge of a solid triangle, or pyramid. It is the line, or ridge, formed when two planes, or sides, meet.]
- 163 The emphasis on games, play and playing includes playing checkers, chess, cards, hide-n-seek and, where Juan and Rosaura are concerned, playing house. The intersection of games, pairs and hiding unites three themes of the novel.
- 164 [C]apable of straightening out their various creases.
- 165 Of three people, it’s more important that two be happy.
- 166 Some day the love of the three would convert itself into one, and the one, well composed/reconciled/repared, will look for its mate.

- 
- 167 Don't make me disappear, disintegrated in my tripartite substance. Make me one, only one, and give me a partner so I can finally be two in one. It seems like a matter of numbers and it is, the hidden sums and remainders of an algebraic compound. I ignore the secret formulas, but I'm looking for mine and I already know it. Remember: Out of three, one; out of the one, another; so that two may result and become one.
- 168 This dual wedding is not the only doubling in effect. Remember that Juan is forty when he first marries seventeen-year-old Rosaura, and that Erasmo is fifty here and Dolores sixteen. Erasmo himself even states: "Dolores era Rosaura, sin duda alguna y para siempre." ["Dolores was Rosaura, undoubtedly and forever."] Both men return, in marriage, to their lost youths. Resolution is possible because each couple is able to relate as peers.
- 169 The house trembles and senses itself referred to by the retrogressive and final summation; time is one, and one the dream that disguises it.
- 170 [H]as no internal windows. "Interior" here can also be translated as "interior," "inside" or "inner."
- 171 [M]issed the smells of her home, the contact with her younger siblings, the presence of her parents ....
- 172 It was the first sign of real trust, the first tie that her heart made in that house, and through this she felt herself less strange, less and orphan, less the sister of Teresa.
- 173 Why her? Why had she, in some way, entered into the family ...? Teresa wasn't part of the family ....
- 174 [E]njoyed a certain authority acquired through her capacity to provide what was needed in the household.
- 175 [H]er seriousness in deciding matters of importance and through the solidarity with her family that she had always shown.
- 176 Yes. The whole world is there.
- 177 Yes, it was the whole world. Perhaps to have gone to church was enough to pay the debt/duty of contemplation.
- 178 Why read that? Don't we have eyes?
- 179 There are things that happen elsewhere or happened long ago and you can't see them. Ah. Those are news or history books; very different.
- 180 [M]imics the attitude of the Creator with images.
- 181 [E]mploying herself in the only legitimate, glorious imitation.
- 182 [P]eople who want to know everything.
- 183 [M]arked accent and such badly pronounced words.
- 184 [T]he indigenous people they taught Spanish to.

- 
- 185 These people who come to enter towns they aren't born in and leave the places they belong are not good people. [The word "meterse" should also be translated here as "to meddle in.""]
- 186 Just the recollection of that man's existence offended Erasmo.
- 187 That's worse. He'll pervert her.
- 188 She shuts herself up in the worst room only to appear in the afternoons and take a turn around the town as if it were her, or rather as if it weren't any body's.
- 189 Elda was an intrusion ....
- 190 How many things did she want to share with them, all of them bought and paid for with her money? Why affiliate herself with an organization of other human beings that had nothing to do with her? Who gave her this ever so ample right of choice?
- 191 She isn't from here nor on vacation. I don't like it/her.
- 192 Erasmo congratulated himself on all of these measures and especially on not having sold his property to a foreigner, not even to a man who came from Mexico City, to whom he would see himself as obligated to give information and every sort of advice.
- 193 [T]hey didn't call godparents nor throw a party; not from shame, nor out of poorly managed pain. Rather, because they had converted themselves into a unity so closed that nothing and no one could intervene and be accepted.
- 194 [T]he house was full of phantoms and ... its inhabitants didn't get together with others because their most familiar dealings were carried out with people from another world.
- 195 [P]eople of another world.
- 196 His parents were right when they closed the world as if it were a door and stayed within the order of their home and their feelings. What was wrong, what was detestable is that this order lasted for many years and not long enough, a fact indicating that it was a thing of fiction ....
- 197 The house felt tired of the footsteps of the same people at the same hours, as if it were entombed and wished to be traveled by many human beings: discovered, shook up. The house wished to live independently of them.
- 198 My God, you are the resurrection and the life!

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FRAGMENTS

Wholeness is equilibrium or fulfillment or companionship. Fragmentation is how we describe the human condition in the twentieth century. These themes play out in the novels of Gerlind Reinshagen and Luisa Josefina Hernández in many ways that reflect the ideas of those scholars surveyed on these subjects. Yet the works of the two authors are themselves so dissimilar as to emphasize the very multiplicity inherent in the modern state of affairs. What agreement is there, if any, about wholeness as a condition, and what might account for the contrast in viewpoint of these two authors? Finally, why would two novelists who examine such relevant themes, and do so so eloquently, still remain relatively unknown outside their own countries?

## A Focus on Wholeness

It is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss fragmentation without referring to some form of a condition that would stand in opposition to it. Not one of the four scholars whose work on this modern condition is discussed at length in these pages sticks exclusively to a focus on the problem or state of disconnection and alienation that is frequently labeled “fragmentation” in the twentieth century. Robert Jay Lifton’s work is itself more focused on what he terms the “protean self,” a response to these fragmenting factors which he views as hopeful, than it is on the factors and conditions that comprise the modern dilemma.

He is not alone in seeking to identify a means to combat disintegrative and isolating tendencies. Both Dennis Brown, who refers to such an oppository state as “self-wholeness,” and George W. Morgan, who occasionally directly refers to it as

“wholeness,” as well as Greenberg and Lifton, at least touch on the concept that threads through much of Louisa Josefina Hernández’s work, namely, that equilibrium, under various names, is either an antidote to or a metaphorical flotation device for, those who are tossed and turned by the seas of the modern age. Most of them do not go so far as to specifically equate the concept with wholeness, as does Hernández, but merely suggest the idea of balance as the answer to the sweeping changes of the twentieth century.

Proteanism itself, Lifton maintains, “is a balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other” (9). The protean self, he explains, “seeks always to maintain a certain poise or balance — an equilibrium or equipoise — to enable it to function in the world. That poise is bound up with agility, with flexible adaptation, and is less a matter of steady and predictable direction than of maneuverability and talent for coping with widely divergent circumstances” (93). Balance in this form would seem to offer no calm center, no motionless state in which a pull in any given direction is counterbalanced by a force or forces in another, but rather, the picture he offers is that of a person standing on a board atop a rolling ball. So long as neither end of the board drops, a form of balance is maintained.

George W. Morgan states, “The whole person ... acknowledges the complexity of life with its various and disparate claims, and maintains a balance that embraces them” (329). Furthermore, “The balance required for wholeness is one that is lived in the here and now of concrete occasions, with their multifarious and often opposing claims, values, and demands on the self” (330). Although his focus, like Lifton’s and in contrast to Hernández’s, is primarily concerned with the wholeness<sup>1</sup> of the individual, coping within a disjointed society, he does acknowledge that “[w]holeness does not reside in the individual as an isolated being but in the person who is in relationship with the world” (326). In this context, he explains, “use and control” must be balanced by “response and responsibility”

to ensure that “use does not degenerate into abuse ...” (326). Yet this mention of community is made almost in passing, and Morgan’s understanding of the concept of balance seems to hinge on the courage to unflinchingly face all demands and uncertainties that present themselves, as well as embracing all possibilities or opportunities one welcomes. The focus is also unflinchingly on the present, uni-dimensional time, without regard to the past or the future. For both of these men, the hub is centered on the individual, which contradicts that which has been written directly about wholeness, as well as Hernández’s concept of equilibrium.

Dennis Brown conceives of “self-wholeness not as rational consistency but as a (finally aesthetic) balancing act among contrarities. Further, the drawing of the ‘parts together’ does not conform to a single static model, found and then lost and then found again, but will vary in nature from occasion to occasion. What matters is not the constituency or arrangement of the self-parts but simply the sense of balance between such fragments as are experienced at any one time’ (102). Balance in this sense is a containing of disparate pieces in such a way that those one labels positive or desirable are not outweighed by those one regards as negative or undesirable. This picture is strikingly similar to that posited by Luisa Josefina Hernández. And although Brown does allow that “the fragmentary or fluid self, if kept in a state of balance, is conducive to authentic relationships as well as to self-honesty” (105), his primary focus, like that of Lifton and Morgan, remains on the individual, and little attempt is made to piece the parts together, little consideration is given to an effort to form a single, coherent picture from any perspective. In addition, Brown emphasizes the aesthetic aspect over experience, philosophy and religion, a theory that stands in profound disagreement with those whose focus is on wholeness, including the Mexican author.

Finally, Robert M. Greenberg writes that, “The tension or balance between individual freedom and society ... will not stay the same. In the future different conditions and needs from without and within will redefine the desired equilibrium” (205). Although this thought is basically an aside from the main text, it does point to Greenberg’s awareness that the need for affiliation, the desire for some form of corporate unity often seems to be at odds with the goal of psychic wholeness within the individual. In addressing the issue as one in which balance is the solution, Greenberg acknowledges the centrality of community to wholeness, as does Morgan, while the other two scholars fail to address the issue. When he refers here to the idea of tension between the individual and community, he uses the same terminology employed by Walter Thiessen when addressing the same pressures.

Thiessen discusses the idea of a “dynamic tension” between individuality and community that “must be maintained for both to be affirmed ...” (2). From his perspective, the solution is “for individuals to integrate their lives around a center that is both transcendent to the community and incarnated within it and themselves. This center is ideally the God who became incarnate in Jesus and who dwells within and among us as the Holy Spirit” (Abstract). As a Mennonite theologian, Thiessen has a strong opinion on what form belief, in the ultimate, should take. But the point he makes here is that only that which is beyond time can hold disparate elements together within time, that only a transcendent force can effect what is essentially a balance between these tensions. Specifically concerned with identifying an antidote to multiplicity, rather than a survival technique, he recognizes the necessity of both the particular and the corporate and the contradictions inherent to embracing both, a difficulty that, he believes, can only be resolved by that which is beyond human.

The philosopher, Carl Vaught, who agrees with Thiessen that there can be no wholeness without religion, also does not directly equate the desired state with equilibrium.

He does, however, allude to it when he discusses the idea of a “midpoint between two extremes” such that “the dimension of difference to be encountered there ...” (152) is preserved, referring here to the seemingly opposite poles of independence and belonging. “The quest for wholeness,” he states, “moves forward toward a larger, more inclusive unity, but it also leads us back to the origins of our individual existence. In doing so, it attempts to overcome fragmentation by allowing us to stand at the midpoint between an unbounded future and a determinate past that has left its individuating mark upon us” (4).

This middle ground between the individual and the community, this midpoint between the past and the future, can also be thought of as a fulcrum, the point around which disparate elements balance and reflective and experiential unity is achieved. Wholeness, for Vaught, is this balance point, “the middle ground between fragmentation and completeness ...” (182), a concept he repeats at three separate points in his book. Although his primary definition of wholeness is that of fulfillment, and although he also asserts that finite self-acceptance and unity are integral as well, these allusions to balance remain.

Several of those whose work directly addresses the problem of fragmentation stress the need for the divine as an element in an opposing condition. “The self can be meaningfully shaped in time only by what is not in time — God” states Dennis Brown (149). “All it [the self] *can* do is trust in the eventuality of a final (Eternal) pattern and meaning — a matter of faith not knowledge” (157). In other words, only the great hereafter will ever finally resolve the conflicts, brokenness and disjunction experienced by the modern being. The balance one must maintain is more a matter of survival in the present, than a truly oppositionary state. Whatever pattern or wholeness there may be, it is beyond the human capacity to understand.

George W. Morgan also implies that religion has a place in wholeness, linking religious conviction with the development of values, and identifying religious thought as one of several valid modes of apprehension leading to knowledge. However, this is a very minor sub-point of his argument and is barely alluded to on two occasions. It does not form part of the central loci in his proposed solution to the problem.

Lifton, although he also refers to “spiritual homelessness” as a challenge to be overcome, primarily identifies religion as negative. He understands it to be one of the causes of fragmentation, namely, the splintering of the church into numerous denominations and their offshoots through the work of the revivalists. In addition, he understands religion, in the form of fundamentalism, as one of several possible destructive reactions to the modern condition. The human being, as having a need for an Eternal dimension, does figure in his perspective, and his answer to the dilemma of fragmentation is strictly temporal and human-centered. It is also the point at which he finally directs his attention to the question of the individual as part of a group.

Despite some agreement from Thiessen and Vaught as to the importance of balance, they do not weigh equilibrium as highly as do either the scholars of fragmentation or Luisa Josefina Hernández. But in other key areas, Hernández, as seen through her novels, is in full agreement with those who study wholeness. The religious element and active community figure strongly in her picture of human integration, both within the individual psyche and within social groupings. In fact, there is tremendous agreement on the essentiality of a religious component to wholeness found in the literature. The variety of religious perspective is astounding and runs the gamut from Christianity to Judaism to Buddhism to Native American spirituality and New Age mysticism. The Eastern perspective, as well as the Western point of view, consistently testifies to the centrality of religion in any path opposing fragmentation. But where the religious experience, or a

relationship with the ultimate, is the sole ingredient in the path of holiness, which also offers an opposing path to the condition of irreconcilable complexity and splintering characterized as fragmentation, religion is but one of several essential components of wholeness.

Where Luisa Josefina Hernández's novels clearly demonstrate the integral nature of the ultimate, individuality and community to this condition, her view of wholeness as equilibrium permits greater diversity than do the various pictures of balance offered by the several scholars examined in these pages. Hers is nearly an Eastern perspective, a vision of that which might be considered "negative" as necessarily balancing the positive. Therefore, her picture of wholeness is one of expanding levels of the condition, not dissimilar to Rovo's image of the Medieval heavens. Only some and not all persons will know psychic wholeness as individuals, namely, in the form of an equilibrium maintained among competing versions of themselves, or as a balance between the many elements that pull them in various directions. Nevertheless, the very lack of psychic unity in others allows for wholeness in the smallest units of community at the next level, and in the larger units beyond that. Her perspective here has legitimately been criticized as deterministic, by those who associate it only with the image of God playing chess with mortals in *Las fuentes ocultas*. This approach, however, ignores the importance of the human will, which pervades all of her work.

Her repetitive illustrations of the number one as a whole number is reminiscent of the Eastern concept of yin and yang, in which two opposing forces, hold each other in balance and create a completed entity, a greater one. But because the focus is on one, because self-actualization produces individuals who are as whole as any couple, it is clear that Hernández is not speaking of dualism. The insistence of Thiessen and Vaught that the number of wholeness is three, when viewed within the Christian tradition, which is

unquestionably appropriate where Thiessen is concerned, is no longer a complete contradiction of Hernández's position. The Christian tradition emphasizes the nature of God as three-in-one. The divine is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three manifestations of a single entity, as liquid, steam and ice are three manifestations of water. There can be said, therefore, to be a tradition within Christianity of understanding the number of wholeness to be one. Where the Christian viewpoint and Hernández's perspective conflict is the point at which it is argued whether two or three can join together to form that unity. No resolution to this disagreement is found in any source we've examined.

Another point of agreement between virtually all voices studied here, is the intrinsic part played by the journey or quest in the movement from fragmentation to wholeness. This aspect of both movement and seeking has been stressed already by those whose specific focus is wholeness per se, but it is present, as well, in the words of Robert Jay Lifton, who states that "[t]he protean pattern becomes a quest for 'relocation'" (15). The implication is that, unless one consciously searches for something other than the dissipation, disconnection, incoherence and division of the modern world, unless effort is made to locate some form of connection or integration of these parts, there is no hope of anything else. Movement and intent are essential, although they may occur subconsciously, perhaps even unconsciously, as though the subject were operating out of instinct.

But it appears that no complete resolution is possible, that any respite from conflicting pressures is a temporary experience, that only philosophical comprehension, not an emotional cognoscence of equilibrium, can be had. Morgan stresses that "[t]here is no final perfection to be reached. ... wholeness is never a static condition to be achieved and thereafter maintained in fixed form. It must be sought again and again, often with difficulty and pain. Every moment of life, each new experience, each new encounter, has to be taken

into the self, and each may call for a wholeness more encompassing and more profound than has yet been attained” (330). Vaught flatly states that “the quest for wholeness ... will never come to an end” (Preface, x). Thiessen portrays the movement from fragmentation to wholeness as cyclic, with new changes in society and the world necessitating renewal in the form of separation, retreat, re-centering on God and return to reestablish, reform or revitalize God-centered community.

In Gerlind Reinshagen’s view of humanity, wholeness is something one may hope for, strive for and even approach, but it is an impossible ideal, so far beyond the realities of the twentieth Century as to be unreachable. The world she portrays is so fragmented, society is so free-floating and deteriorated, that the tools necessary to the quest for wholeness are either entirely missing or in such disrepair as to be unusable. Symbol systems that should link one to the past, to a time prior to one’s own existence, and therefore aid in movement toward both the future and the ultimate, that is, in approaching a time that exists after and beyond one’s lifetime, have been shredded by developments in history. The pieces that exist are vague and disconnected from each other and from the world. Communities have been destroyed by various forms of upheaval, until little remains as an example. Religion is no longer understood as relevant. The pseudo-scientific methods of the business world discourage reflection and the busy-ness of modern life crowds out the time it would require. Although Carl Vaught insists that asking a philosophical question is a form of the quest for wholeness, Reinshagen’s characters have no basis from which to connect with philosophy, even in the shape of dialogue. Where Falk and his foster daughter engage in an exchange of phrases, they seem to talk past each other, never connecting.

Perhaps the reason wholeness is understood not to be permanent or lasting by those for whom it is either a hope or a condition, is because the unity for which the human

strives, the organicity imagined, the connection with others perceived to have existed in past centuries is, at base, a fiction. Although varieties of wholeness, as described in these pages, may be within the range of human experience, i.e. wholeness as a balance of tensions, as equilibrium between the positive and negative, that form for which the human whole-heartedly longs may never have existed. It may be but a wishful nostalgia for an inexistent long ago, “a past of perfect harmony that never was” (Lifton 10).

The assumption that prior eras embraced a continuity and purpose that is absent today is based to a great extent on the written record that remains of previous ages, primarily on their literature, but to a certain extent on their histories as well. It is entirely legitimate to question whether the written record can be accepted as a reliable indicator of who our ancestors actually perceived themselves to be, and of how they viewed the world around them. There is ample evidence that unitary selfhood was the literary norm for centuries, until relatively recently. In this sense, self-wholeness could be said to have been a normative assumption of these prior ages. But it may also have been a construction of societies and individuals different than our own.

Despite Robert M. Greenberg’s insistence on “powerful congruences between extraliterary and literary realms” (15), which leads him to conclude that there is “a representational relationship between the splintered worlds in certain literary texts and the splintering historical scene” (15), the picture of the autonomous, integral, continuous self of earlier prose may reflect the beliefs of the time, rather than actual experience. Unitary selfhood in earlier literature may be an accurate, or at least approximate, reflection of the psychological perspective of the culture that produced it, in the sense that there was a common belief among writers that such should be the case. Although there is a difference in degree today in fragmenting factors; disruption, discord, divisive movements, disarray and insecurity are endemic to the human condition. As such, these elements, along with

disquietude, estrangement and alienation, have always been present, not necessarily for every person in every time, but within the world in general and perceptible to an intellectual mind.

The Double appeared in literature when intellectuals began to question, rather than accept, belief in the idea of unitary selfhood. The historical changes and conditions outlined here make it difficult to retain such a belief today. Yet such a picture persists today in popular or escapist literature, as the longing for unity, for security, for coherence, correspondence, cohesion and convergence remains active. If this is indeed the case, Luisa Josefina Hernández's backward projection into the time of the crusades, although the creation of a twentieth-century mentality, would not need to be dismissed out of hand. Cruelty, hardship, pain, suffering and dissatisfaction are common to all ages, as is some tension between the individual and the corporate, and an awe-filled non-comprehension of the ultimate. As Luisa Josefina Hernández, in particular, points out, fragmentation is not the only contradiction to wholeness, nor does the latter state serve as sole opposition to fragmentation.

#### A Comparison of Novelists

What, then, can account for the differences between the more hopeful world view of the Mexican author, and the bleak perspective of her German counterpart? Based on the superficiality of their external outlines, one encounters mainly similarities. Nearly the same age, both women have experienced marriage, motherhood and a certain amount of fame as playwrights. Both have experienced life under some form of socialism, Gerlind Reinshagen in East Germany briefly, until she crossed over to the West before the building of the Berlin wall, and Luisa Josefina Hernández in Cuba, where she taught for a year and seriously considered remaining.

The differences, therefore, may best be explained by a combination of cultural and historical factors, as well as very personal experiences influencing the psychological development of the two women. Although both countries are considered part of the Western world, Germany and Mexico have very different histories. Leaving aside early histories of settlement and development, of warring tribal German bands and the conquest of ancient native civilizations in Mexico by the Spanish, one still finds significant differences between historical events of the present century.

The sweeping effects of two world wars on the German people, as outlined in Chapter Three, cannot be underestimated. Germany, following the end of WWI, was a broken nation, saddled with enormous war debts and reparations at a time of little capital. An economic crisis of devastating proportions set in on the heels of the war, part of the economic depression being experienced by most nations worldwide, but given that Germany had just lost a major war, this country was hit particularly hard. Unemployment rose drastically and the inflation rate increased alarmingly. Resentful and desperate, the German populace was easily drawn to a strong leader who promised to rebuild the nation and who seemed to deliver. Adolf Hitler, of course, shortly plunged the nation into a second world-wide conflict that would yield even more devastating results.

Germany was bombed into submission by the Allies, leaving many major German cities over fifty percent destroyed. The last several years of the war and the first several years of the peace that followed were a time of starvation and, for many, of inadequate protection from the elements, as building materials, coal and oil were in short supply. While these physical hardships were equal to those that followed the first great war, the survivors of WWII bore a psychic burden, both as individuals and as a people unique to their age. Hitler's systematic annihilation of the Jews at the hands of the German people produced corporate guilt and shame that was borne by virtually everyone who survived the

war. Somewhere between 4.5 and 5.5 million Jews were exterminated by the Nazis and their allies, while the general German populace chose not to see what was happening — until, after the war, it became impossible to pretend not to know.

Where was the church in Germany during this veiled slaughter of human beings? For the most part, both the Catholic and Protestant Churches' organized leadership was colluding with those in power, although their paths to this point differed. When the National Socialists first came to power in 1933, the German Protestant Church initially welcomed them. In part, this was due to frequent Christian rhetoric sprinkled throughout Hitler's speeches, verbiage that would disappear shortly thereafter, and in part it was due to Protestants' general support for any non-communist opposition party that would revoke the policies of the Weimar Republic. In September of 1933, Hitler appointed a little-known minister as bishop, which prompted the first stirrings of a small, decentralized, ineffective Protestant opposition movement known as the "Bekennende Kirche."<sup>2</sup> The Catholic hierarchy, in contrast, initially opposed the advent of National Socialist power, going so far as to excommunicate party members and deny them the sacraments. They held this position only until March, 1933, as their political clout was constantly eroding. When the second of the two German political parties, the Constitutional "Zentrum"<sup>3</sup> party, which, along with the "Bayrische Volkspartei,"<sup>4</sup> was essentially a political arm of the Catholic Church, was prohibited in July, 1933, the last independent political party to be outlawed by the Nazis, Catholic hierarchy began to toe the National Socialist line. That very month an accord was signed by a representative of the new German government and the Vatican that guaranteed the Catholic Church protection in Germany, in return for refraining from political action — and all action that could conceivably be interpreted as political.

Only a very few Christian priests, ministers and theologians, nearly all of whom were acting independently, offered any resistance to the message of the National Socialists,

Martin Niemöller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer were among them. Disgracefully, what organized resistance there was from the church, generally centered around the defense of theological principles. The exception to this was the concerted, organized joint protest against the Nazi euthanasia program made by the Protestants and Catholics together, which resulted not in its elimination, but in a drastic pullback of its execution.

Religion in Germany today is greatly marginalized, for the most part. German theologians remain at the cutting edge of intellectual religious debate, but are a prime example of Morgan's "specialism." There is some religious presence in society in some of the smaller towns and villages, but that is increasingly not part of the world of the young, even there. Required religious education in the schools is sometimes belittled, and frequently valued purely for its ethical dimension. Without a social toehold, the idea of God does not occur as easily, eliminating one potential source of hope for something constant in a fluctuating world.

The Nazi propaganda machine also manipulated language to such an extent that survivors of that time in history had good reason to view language as suspect. Communists, political opponents and intellectuals critical of the regime were taken into "Schutzhaft,"<sup>5</sup> from which they usually failed to return. The "Endlösung der Judenfrage"<sup>6</sup> meant the wholesale extermination of a people. The push for "Lebensraum"<sup>7</sup> put a gloss on the wars of aggression that physically forced people from their homes, off their land and into forced labor in Eastern European countries occupied by German military forces.

This history is the background against which Gerlind Reinshagen's novel *Rovinato* is set, and these are the time passages she herself experienced. Gerlind Reinshagen was thirteen years old in 1939 and nineteen when she (and remaining family members?) were forced to flee her birthplace in Ostpreußen, which today is part of Poland. Cut off physically from the past either by the deaths of relatives, destruction of property or forced,

terror-stricken flight in the face of conquering Russian troops, many Germans were also psychically severed from the past when faith was lost in the ancient symbol systems that had carried meaning for endless generations before them. The appropriation of religious figures and institutions for inhumane activity which had been, for the most part, willing, resulted in disillusionment and retreat from spirituality in the form it had been widely understood and supported, without the existence of any alternate form with which to replace it. Many also wanted nothing to do with a past that included the horror perpetrated against the Jews, and therefore, began to build themselves a society and an identity from an absolute cut-off point, trying to flourish as a plant without roots.

One must also take into account the fact that communities had been forcefully ruptured by death, dislocation and the distrust that grew from a dictatorial one-party system. As Reinshagen portrays in *Rovinato*, various forms of community would spring up again, as people began to rebuild that which is essential to the human spirit. But, as she then later clearly depicts in *Am großen Stern*, such would not universally be the case. The necessary tools that would at least allow for the idea of wholeness or for the hope of it are either missing, partial or not in working order in the universe Reinshagen imagines and chronicles. The workings of her own mind, but also her personal history and the society she lives in account, at least partially, for this. She also shares in the responsibility that Germany's artists and writers, filmmakers included, shouldered after the war to work against the popular desire to start all over from a "Ground Zero," to try to block the recent past that was so abhorrent and from which they were already severed by events. Artists and writers, beginning with Wolfgang Borchert and "the Group of '47," among others, played the role of conscience in order to help the German people overcome their past by coming to terms with it. Reinshagen's bleak portrayal of a modern world governed by

disconnects — from the future (in *Rovinato*), the past (in *Stern*), the eternal — can be understood as another means to this end.

World War II had only minimal impact on Mexico. Although the nation, under then President Manuel Ávila Camacho, formally declared war against Germany on May 22, 1942, the war never entered its borders, nor did any more than one small squadron of Mexican troops leave the country in conjunction with the war. There were also no negative economic ramifications associated with this stance, which was essentially nothing but a formal declaration of support for the side of the Allies.

What WWII brought to Mexico, however, were refugees. At the beginning of the war, Mexico took in fleeing intellectuals, communists, artists and Jews. German artists' colonies sprang up in several Mexican cities, complete with their own newspapers, theater and publishers. German communist refugees found support among Mexican communist groups, where a number of Mexican intellectuals were politically active. Following the surrender of Germany, Mexico also, at times knowingly, in some cases unknowingly, accepted further refugees with suspected Nazi ties.

The event in Mexican history capable of estranging a people from the past in the way that WWII did for the German people is the Mexican Revolution. But if links to the past were severed, it was those more recent ties to Europe, because Mexicans remain tied to their pre-Conquest past, connected both through history and religion. Although indigenous people are discriminated against in modern Mexico, there is also great pride taken in the ancient cultures from which they, as well as much of the remaining populace, are descended. Place names, street names and personal names remain from the days of the Aztecs, Toltecs, Olmecs, Mexicas and Mayas, among other indigenous civilizations. The mythos of their once-great ancestors, whose cultures were highly developed for their time, pervades both official discourse and popular thought and culture.

The Mexican Revolution also did not succeed in destroying the conscious connection to their colonial past, in the way that WWII distanced Germans from their own. Essayist, poet and critic Octavio Paz's analogy in *El laberinto de la soledad* (1950) of Mexico as the indigenous woman raped by the foreign conqueror still holds sway in the creative imagination. Scholars refer to this idea frequently, increasingly often in order to refute it, when discussing Mexican literature of this century.

Invasion by the Spanish, with their horses, steel and, most devastatingly, their viruses, made Spanish the dominant language and largely replaced native religions with Catholicism, which has, throughout the centuries, been modified itself in various degrees by the very religions it sought to supplant. The result is a spiritual context in Mexico that transcends time; broad cultural recognition and acknowledgment of an ultimate dimension to time and life and an active, intact symbol system embracing both narrative and figurative traditions. Rituals remain pertinent to daily life and are slowly modified, as cultural understanding changes. This is not to say that actions taken by Mexico as a nation or as a people are spiritually directed, but rather, that there is broad belief in the existence or possibility of the soul and a spiritual dimension to life.

This belief remains despite periodic challenge in the form of actions (or lack thereof) taken by the clergy as the representatives of the faith. Despite historic collusion between priests and plantation owners in some parts of Mexico, and despite the disgraceful refusal of those clerics inside the Iglesia de Santiago Tlatelolco to open their doors to the wounded or offer sanctuary to protesters fleeing the bullets of the army and police during the brutal government put-down of the student riots in August, 1968, spiritual consciousness flourishes. The fact that the church is one of the social structures in Latin America most responsible for the subjection and objectification of women notwithstanding, religious faith endures, perhaps, in part, because the church in Mexico has

also been part of the progressive arm of Catholicism, beginning with Fray Bartolomé de las Casas' work among and defense of the indigenous population in the sixteenth century to Bishop Samuel Ruiz's proponent of Liberation Theology in the twentieth.

What must be stressed is that, since, although she considers herself a Christian, she is not a practicing Catholic, the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church in Mexico is not itself responsible for the climate of hope that makes its way into Hernández's work, but rather, the fact that religion still has a culturally sanctioned, widely accepted place in the society opens the way for a pervading sense of hope. The presence of religion maintains the idea of the existence of God, and a personal encounter with God can be liberating and strengthening to the individual, offering them a belief in the possibility of something better, whether or not this hope or belief is validated by the structures and interpretations of the organized religion. For some people, this aspiration is to a sweet hereafter. For others, it finds an outlet in the fight for social justice. Liberation Theology taps into this hope of a better today for all, or at least of a better tomorrow for our children, demanding action from the faithful of today.

In addition, Mexico, along with a number of other South American nations, has not yet experienced the breakdown of community to the extent of many first-world countries in the West. The family unit, for one, retains a strong social force in Mexico, at least ideologically speaking, and in many cases most family members still retain close bonds despite the distance often occasioned by migration.<sup>8</sup> While Germans long resisted the twentieth-century trend toward mobility, the latter decades have seen increased numbers of people relocating out of career considerations. In addition to this relative physical stability, Mexico is also home to another institution that fosters community. Women swear a form of binding friendship to each other as "comadres,"<sup>9</sup> and men have an equivalent in the "compadre"<sup>10</sup> designation. Although these bonds may occasionally be superficial, and

although in some areas the designation has lost its reference to connection, for many people the communities of friendship that are formed are lasting and durable.

The combination of active, enduring symbol systems, a sense of continuity with the past, solid examples of community in action and general belief in the existence of an ultimate dimension, I maintain, leads to the hopefulness even in the face of pain, suffering and alienation that threads through all of Luisa Josefina Hernández's novels. Her works themselves portray the world in this light, and the culture that nourished her includes these components as well. The elements of fragmentation are as much a part of Hernández's Mexico City home as they are of Gerlind Reinshagen's Berlin, but those elements that permit the broad hope of greater connection between them, of fusion or convergence or at least for a balance among the pieces, particularly as defined by scholars of wholeness, are more present in modern Mexico than they are in contemporary Germany.

#### The Enigma of Obscurity

Some writers, with their first published work, achieve a toehold in literary history from where they will, over succeeding years, expand the canon, whether based solely on this one text or on the sum total of their life's work. Other authors with serious literary pretensions are never quite accepted by the teachers, literature professors and academic critics who serve as the gatekeepers of narrative high culture. Quality is the first prerequisite, of course, but what other factors are involved in the choice of which author is honored and valued, either during his or her lifetime or throughout the centuries that follow? Specifically, where Gerlind Reinshagen and Luisa Josefina Hernández are concerned, what accounts for the fact that the respect they receive as contemporary playwrights has not yet translated into esteem for their talents as novelists? What follows

cannot be definitive, but is one possible line of thought that may, in some measure, answer this question.

Quality is not at issue where either of these novelists is concerned. Although Reinshagen typically, as Betty Nance Weber delineates it, “der normalen Umgangssprache oder auch dem Jargon ... und oft selbst Klischees und Banalitäten benutzt ...”<sup>11</sup> (238), she does so in a very tightly constructed framework that also includes the highly skilled selection and deployment of *leitmotifs*, traces of Berthold Brecht’s epic theater and challenging experimentation with point of view and narrative voice. In addition, Reinshagen tackles form intelligently and adventurously, and her work displays a careful attention to word selection. The latter results in a multi-layered, densely textured strata of meanings, which itself yields the purposeful atmospheres within which her plots unroll, and which poses such a challenge to translation.

Hernández’s strength, for her part, lies in her ability to experiment broadly with form, structure and, to a lesser extent, narrative voice, and to make it work. Unlike most novelists, who find their “voice,” a certain recognizable prose tone presented in a limited range of forms, Luisa Josefina Hernández is as adept at narrated monologue as she is at authorial narration, and as competent writing allegory or an *auto sacramental* as she is at producing a traditional linear plot or a panoramic novel. In my opinion, the only one of her novels to fail as literature is the one that has received the most attention in academic journals, *Los palacios desiertos*. In this case, the form itself is so intriguing that it has attracted the interest of academia, despite, in places, the occasionally poor quality of the prose and never quite believable reactions of the characters. The near-uniform quality of her work is probably the main reason why at least one scholarly article is published on it annually, and why her prose, both dramatic and narrative, has been the topic of several dissertations.

In the case of Hernández, there is hard evidence to say that her peers value her as one of the most important Mexican novelists of the twentieth century. In 1978, Beth Miller and Alfonso González interviewed twenty-six Mexican women writers, the texts of which were released as *26 autoras del México actual*. Each of these twenty-six authors was asked, among other questions, about who she regarded as the preeminent twentieth-century women writers in her country. The names that were most often repeated included Elena Poniatowska, Elena Garro, Rosario Castellanos and Luisa Josefina Hernández. In references to Hernández, the multi-talented Guadalupe Dueñas (novelist, television script-writer and author of several short story collections) told Miller, “me parece que es lo mejor que tenemos”<sup>12</sup> (169). Elena Poniatowska, who is herself the most generous with her compliments of other writers of all those surveyed in this volume, mentions Hernández twice, once for her novel *Nostalgia de Troya*, and again both for her novels and her dramas. Hernández, for her part, cites Elena Poniatowska and Elena Garro as writers whose work she respects.

The criteria of these interviewees in 1978 are supported by others, both artists and scholars, twenty years later. Raquel Gutierrez Estupiñán, in 1997 asserts it is, “Luisa Josefina Hernández, escritora que junto a Rosario Castellanos y Elena Garro forma la triada de las grandes escritoras mexicanas de la década de los años sesenta en México”<sup>13</sup> (93). The playwright Emilio Carballido states that Hernández is “la que no pocos consideramos el talento mayor de nuestra generación (y de varias). La creemos el autor más inventivo y lúcido, con una obra fecunda que enriquece las letras de nuestro idioma [sic], tanto en lo dramático como en lo narrativo”<sup>14</sup> (706). U.S. scholar Frank Dauster agrees: “It is impossible to include in a course on the Latin American novel everyone who ought to be there, such as Elena Garro or Rosario Castellanos or Luisa Josefina Hernández, to mention only three Mexicans” (16).

It should be remembered that Hernández, Garro and Castellanos are contemporaries, and Poniatowska, although ten years younger than Garro, was born only five years after Hernández. Garro, Castellanos and Poniatowska forms the triad of the women whose work first achieved national and international recognition by academic scholars, who sought to rediscover and reclaim women's works passed over by the patriarchal systems and structures of the literary machine. Since the time of Miller's interviews in 1978, constant reassessment and reappraisal of literature by women has led to a new appreciation for the works of some of their predecessors and other contemporaries, such as Nellie Campobello (b. 1909), Inés Arredondo (1928-1989) and Julieta Campos (b. 1932). In addition, there has been an increase in the number of women as authors of literary novels, both in Mexico and in Latin America as a whole, beginning in the early part of the century and continuing through the present day. Both Mexico and Germany have become significantly more receptive to women writers since the 1970s. Where both Spanish-language and German-language literature is concerned, it is too soon to know which authors and which works will survive the judgment of time. Where there are grounds for optimism, is that literature will no longer be ignored simply by virtue of having been authored by women.

But if it is also true, as Wilma Detjens points out, that, "Luisa Josefina Hernández es una dramaturga y novelista mexicana que hasta ahora no ha recibido la atención merecida por los críticos literarios"<sup>15</sup> (76), that Hernández does indeed merit the attention currently paid to these other Mexican women authors — Rosario Castellanos, Elena Poniatowska, Elena Garro — why is it that she continues to fail to draw the same notice? Why is it that so few of her plays — and none of her novels — are translated? Why is her work so little taught in survey classes in Spanish and Latin American Literature departments in the United States where these other authors are studied? Why is it that her work, along with that of

several of her contemporaries, is only now being reevaluated, and was not part of the first wave of appreciation accorded several women authors in her generation?

Clearly, the lack of recognition of her narrative work cannot be due solely to the obstacles faced by a woman in a patriarchal society. As noted above, several other talented female novelists from her country, in addition to women writers from nearly every other country in Central and South America, have made inroads into the Spanish language canon in the twentieth century. In addition, although the process has often not been a smooth one, she has not faced insurmountable barriers to publishing, as the existence of sixteen published novels testifies. Yet, her work is less recognized and less studied in the United States than that of Garro, Castellanos and Poniatowska, as well as that of a recent series of Latin American women, the quality of whose work is under debate, namely, Laura Esquivel, Isabel Allende and Angeles Mastretta.

Hernández, herself, believes she knows the answer. In 1996 in an interview with Miguel Angel Quemain, she offered, “Pero debo reconocer que yo también he tenido culpas, hay personas que son su propia oficina de publicidad y yo no tengo tiempo y no me interesa hacer eso, me choca”<sup>16</sup> (253). This is very similar to what she told Sharon Magnarelli in 1989: “[L]o que se ha visto muy claramente es que las personas que venden los libros, ellas solas son su agencia de relaciones públicas. Se hacen propaganda, invitan a las gentes que deben invitar, tienen una vida social muy activa, hacen muchas relaciones. Sus libros empiezan a venderse y a publicarse. Pero yo no soy de esos porque no tengo tiempo y no me gusta”<sup>17</sup> (402). Emilio Carballido agrees with her verdict, first asking, “¿Por qué es especialmente más grave la situación para ella?” then answering his own question, “[P]orque a una mujer se le perdonan menos la inteligencia superior, el desdén a la autopublicidad, la intransigente violencia para hablar claro, sin apoyarse en ningún partido ni grupo”<sup>18</sup> (705). In part, then, he is convinced that her unwillingness/refusal to

be part of a marketing machine is responsible for the fact that her work is often overlooked. But he also believes that, because she is a woman, there is more resistance to acknowledging her talents and abilities.

While there is undoubtedly some truth to what she says — and Hernández is remarkably consistent in her answers to a variety of questions over the decades — and with which Carballido is in agreement, I do not believe that this is the full explanation. Nor am I convinced that the missing part of the equation is the recalcitrance of mainly male Latin American academics and critics, although it undoubtedly exists. I say this because Latin American women's literary writing has been “rescued” from historical ignorance mainly by feminist scholars of the three nations that comprise North America, not by the systems of high cultural valorization in place within these countries themselves. And Luisa Josefina Hernández has repeatedly insisted that she is not a feminist.

“[Y]o soy una gente que he trabajado siempre con hombres y he tenido las mismas oportunidades que ellos. Nunca se me ha degradado ni se me ha tratado mal porque fuera mujer. Yo me he sentido igual a ellos siempre,”<sup>19</sup> she told Sharon Magnarelli (404) in 1989. “A mí nunca me ha pasado nada por ser mujer. Nada,”<sup>20</sup> she insisted to Michelle Muncy in 1976 (75). It is entirely plausible that Hernández may not have consciously experienced discrimination in her profession. Appointed a professor of the dramatic arts at a young age, she has won recognition as an academic, a critic, a dramatist and a novelist.

What feminist scholars may find disturbing is her insistence that the core of any problems women experience lies within the women themselves, and not within patriarchal society or cultural strictures. “Creo que acá, la mujer más humilde siempre tiene una oportunidad y si no se aprovecha es por un elemento de descuido, de un deseo de no ocuparse de las cosas,”<sup>21</sup> she told Beth Miller in 1978 (247). “Mira, ni existe la misoginia ...,” she opined to Cristina Pacheco in the same year, “ni creo en el cuento de que las

mujeres no pueden realizarse intelectualmente a causa del hogar, eso es una simple excusa”<sup>22</sup> (42). As she later remarked to Sharon Magnarelli:

[P]ienso que nosotros no tenemos en México el problema. En México estamos todas las mujeres protegidas por la ley. Lo que es necesario es educarlas para que sepan aprovechar sus derechos; ya están leyes. Pero también hay que educar a los hombres porque ellos tampoco saben aprovechar sus derechos. Entonces es un problema general de ignorancia, de mala educación, de mal uso de la ley.<sup>23</sup> (404)

A few sentences later in the same interview, she does allow condescendingly, “Ahora yo entiendo muy bien que en otros países haya un movimiento feminista porque las leyes no son iguales, porque tienen que defender sus sueldos, descansos, maternidad”<sup>24</sup> (404).

Her literary works bear out this vision of society, and although feminist critics note that she “aporta una visión bastante amargada de la incomunicación y la debilidad de la mujer dentro de la familia”<sup>25</sup> (Torner 567) and that “there is moral anger at the abuse suffered by her characters” (de Valdes 243), it is also undeniable that “[h]er often brutal unmasking of the feminine abuse of men is an uncomfortable factor that a narrow minded or prescriptive feminism cannot contend with except by omission” (de Valdes 243). From a feminist perspective, this can be seen, Enrique Torner demonstrates, “como un intento de subrayar lo negativo de una situación social para que su público busque alternativas más positivas”<sup>26</sup> (567). In fact, several critics and scholars have, justifiably, addressed Luisa Josefina Hernández’s portrayal of women as feminist. They include Elsa Margarita Saucedo, Kristen Nigro, Deb Cohen and Peggy Job. This is a legitimate point of view, and one which they are able to defend based on the texts themselves. The author’s personal stance on the issue is of no more importance to a reading of her work than is her intention when writing it.

Even when pushed by Beth Miller into admitting that her experience as a woman, namely, in the area of child care and child rearing (Hernández has four children) was different than that of the men with whom she associated, she refused to admit that any of the cause for it lay in either social or cultural constructs. The blame, she insisted, lies with the inalterable biological differences between women and men.

It must be remembered that Hernández was raised as an only child (her two step-brothers were already married and out of the house when she was born) by her father, a supreme court judge, among the cream of Mexican society, and also that she is extraordinarily beautiful, which also opens doors to women in Western cultures. She has been married and divorced three times and has earned her own livelihood during her entire adult life. Her experiences are in no way typical of the average Mexican woman, as both Saucedo and de Valdés carefully underline. Nevertheless, these statements may frustrate North American feminist scholars (and indeed, the tone of several of the follow-up questions in these interviews reflects this), who have little difficulty in soliciting agreement with feminist positions from other Mexican women authors, including, recently, Elena Poniatowska and, before her death in 1974, Rosario Castellanos.

In 1990, Diane Marting suggested that judgment on the question be reserved, expressing a position held for some time by English-language feminists working closely with their Spanish-language counterparts:

[C]lassifying an individual as 'feminist' is complicated by the differences between Latin American and North American feminist movements and between twentieth-century and earlier ways of thinking. It is not an exaggeration to say that the location of the line that defines feminism from other beliefs varies in each of the countries of Spanish America. As a result, only in the broadest sense — as a consciousness of injustice based on gender and sexual identity —

can one speak accurately and meaningfully to North American readers of these writers' feminisms. (Introduction, xix)

Even though Marting's careful, expansive outlook marks the predominant trend in scholarly feminist thought today, the position expressed on this issue by Luisa Josefina Hernández still is not incorporated within this definition of feminist.

Going one step further than Marting, María Elena de Valdés, writing in *The Shattered Mirror* in 1998, describes an exclusively Mexico-oriented definition of feminism, echoing what has been argued by many feminist critics of Latin American literature since the early 1980s. Hernández's statements on the subject do not ring foreign from this perspective, but it is a view of feminism which may only with difficulty be understood and accepted by feminist scholars among Mexico's North American neighbors. De Valdés points out that Mexico is a mixture of the first and third worlds. Therefore, feminism in Mexico, unlike in the U.S., Canada and Europe, must take class issues into consideration. "[F]irst world feminisms have limited validity in third world contexts. In the third world, the struggle for social justice and basic human rights is so fundamental that a feminist is a social critic who forces the debate into a single basic claim: a social system based on the exploitation of gender is a system where all, men and women, are victims." (13-14). Under this conception of feminism, Luisa Hernández's novels may finally find a home in the feminist classroom, alongside the many other worthy novels of Latin American women writers currently being studied. But whether under the auspices of feminism or not, her works stand up based on literary merit alone.

Reasons why Gerlind Reinshagen's novels receive comparatively little scholarly attention are not identical with Hernández's case still, concerning the route taken by feminist studies, some may be interrelated. Reinshagen, like Hernández, is roundly considered one of the preeminent female playwrights in her country, but there is little

consensus within intellectual circles with respect to her value as a novelist. There is, to begin with, significantly less material in print that deals with Gerlind Reinshagen's literary production, than there is in reference to Hernández's. One reason for this is simple quantity. Reinshagen has published seven plays, four novels and one collection of short stories to Hernández's more than forty plays and sixteen novels. She began writing later and writes more slowly than does her Mexican counterpart. Yet despite not having begun to write professionally until she was thirty, and then not turning to the stage until after her fortieth birthday, her dramatic work is widely acclaimed. It has also been commercially successful. Her plays *Himmel und Erde*<sup>27</sup> (1974) and *Sonntagskinder*<sup>28</sup> (1976) have been performed over 490 and 250 times, respectively, and she later also scripted the latter for a feature film. Her rate of production, although much lower than that of Hernández, is not unusually low in comparison with others, given that nearly all her stage and prose work has been produced in the twenty years since 1980, in addition to a number of radio plays, scattered poems, several children's books and criticism.

Some might suggest that professional jealousy is at work here. Despite the fact that most German<sup>29</sup> writers today work in more than one genre, each is typically best known in only one. During this century, the Swiss author, Max Frisch, alone has been equally acclaimed as both a dramatist and a novelist in the German language. Thus, there may be an undercurrent of feeling that Reinshagen has been recognized in one area and that is sufficient. But professional jealousy is rampant in every age and certainly is sufficient to retard recognition where there is merit.

The commercial success of several of her plays, as well as the movie treatment of *Sonntagskinder*, coupled with the fact that she began her writing career in radio and children's literature, i.e. in two of the lesser-esteemed genres, may contribute to lingering suspicion of the quality of Reinshagen's novels. In Germany, very much like in the United

States, there runs an undercurrent of suspicion wherever much money is made in connection with the arts. Had her novels been bestsellers, this theory would be more plausible, yet none of her narrative efforts have been nearly as successful as her plays.

Historical factors are more likely indicators of reason why Reinshagen — like so many other German-language women writers of this century — is only casually studied. Academic attention was first fiercely concentrated on women writers as an outgrowth of the “Frauenbewegung”<sup>30</sup> of the 1970s. Simultaneously, the movement also inspired women to write in greater numbers even than had the aftermath of WWII, which also produced unprecedented numbers of women entering the literary field. The result was the rediscovery of literary foremothers and the redirection of attention to works by authors such as Ricarda Huch (1864-1947), Nelly Sachs (1891-1970), Ilse Aichinger (b. 1921), Marieluise Fleißer (1901-1974), Marie Luise Kaschnitz (1900-1974), Elisabeth Langgässer (1899-1950), Ina Seidel (1885-1974) and Luise Rinser (b. 1911), as well as to the writings of the women of the German Romantic period. Yet other than the giant figure of Christa Wolf (b. 1929), the immortal poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff (1797-1848) and, to a lesser extent, the well-established icons of Anna Seghers (1900-1983) and Ingeborg Bachmann (1926-1973), there is little consensus as to which authors are studied, and few college courses that concern themselves with the body of a German woman author’s work.

This lack of agreement among the feminist theorists of German literature, who are attempting to do for German women authors what their philosophical sisters have so effectively done for those who write in Spanish, can be attributed to three factors. First, there is the problem of identification with a movement, of an author’s work being valued for its role in literary history, rather than for its literary merits. This is the case with many of the novels that are representative of German women’s writing in the 1970s, during the heyday of the *Frauenbewegung*. Often exploratory in both tone and form, many of them

are also justly criticized as simplistic, even trivial. Yet these same novels also established several hallmarks of literature by women that were later better elaborated by others: an awareness of the world that differs from that of men, aesthetic innovations, autobiographical emphasis or tendencies, questions of self-identity as an important theme, language experimentation and general acknowledgement of a frustration with a literary language that was established by men as being insufficient for complete expression of a woman's perspective.

Thus, especially for this particular group of authors, individual texts were singled out as important, rather than critical attention being placed on individual authors and their entire *oeuvre*. The result is that, although the authors included in any survey course may vary from one course to the next, the particular title attached to any given author tends to remain constant. Thus, for example, Gabriele Wohmann's novel *Abschied für länger*<sup>31</sup> (1965) is studied, but not her later novels *Ernste Absicht*<sup>32</sup> (1970) or *Das Glücksspiel*<sup>33</sup> (1981). Each novelist, or short story writer tends to be represented by a single volume of her work, which adds to the interchangeable nature of who gets studied.<sup>34</sup> Even Seghers and Bachmann sometimes receive this treatment, as well. This is very different than the pattern of studies that has been established where Latin American women's literature is concerned.

For authors whose work is limited to the past two decades, there is also the problem of its newness and the lack of testing by time. Feminist scholarship (especially as directed, in the German sense to "Literatur von Frauen über Frauen für Frauen"<sup>35</sup> [Schnell 272]) and interest in literature by women, will continue far into the future. Over the course of decades and centuries, certain texts and particular authors will endure, as has ever been the case, only, from this century on, some of them will be women.

For an author such as Gerlind Reinshagen, who, in the 1970s, was not yet publishing the dramas and novels by which her literary reputation will be measured in history, the consequences are both positive and negative. She cannot be lumped in with the early *Frauenbewegung* novels of that decade either by proximity or themes, which will avoid, one hopes, the situation in which a single work is picked as representative and the remainder of her *oeuvre* ignored. On the other hand, for those writers who are associated with this group, at least they are recorded as contributors to literary history. Because nearly Reinshagen's entire production falls within the past two decades, her work must yet be sifted through the passage of time, via perceptions of culture as reflected in literary criticism and scholarship.

While her work does receive attention from the academy, she is not a highly-studied author at present, and it may be that Reinshagen's prose style itself plays a part in the lack of recognition her novels receive from the literary establishment. Her experiment with blending many voices into one in *Rovinato* is not entirely successful. Too often, it is confusing and jarring, rather than integrated, without seeming to be so intended. She never again attempted to express a collective voice using this technique, and successive novels employ multiple points of view in a "stew" of voices that avoid this confusion. However, despite dealing with serious themes and ironing out her command of narrative voice, her use of common, banal aspects of the language may be an impediment to judging the worth of her prose, even though it is clear to the reader of her novels that this style serves a literary purpose. Yet examples exist of German novels and plays written almost entirely in the Berlin dialect, likewise consciously so constructed, that are nonetheless valued as great literature by scholars and critics. Carl Zuckmayer's play *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick*<sup>36</sup> (1931) and Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) are two cases in point.

Unlike the *la Onda* literary movement in Mexico, Reinshagen's use of the vernacular is not specifically linked to youth culture, or even to a specific historical time. Her works may therefore survive as something more than a footnote in literary history in which several representative works are widely studied as examples of the trend, which has thus far been the fate of the early feminist novels in Germany, and which would be an unsurprising destiny for the *Onda* novels. Her everyday language cuts across age, sex and class boundaries. Many of the sayings and phrases she employs date back several generations and are passed on as a form of folk culture transcending time (at least to a certain extent).

Gerlind Reinshagen's narrative experiments can be fruitfully compared with those of Gertrude Stein. Both authors have tried to reproduce actual speech in the common milieu, as opposed to public or academic speech. Stein was particularly conscious of the general tendency of people to repeat themselves, and incorporated repetition into her technique. Reinshagen, when questioned, told interviewer Gerd Jäger, "Füllworte spielen eine große Rolle in unserer Sprache, man muß nur mal drauf achten"<sup>37</sup> (30). Gertrude Stein, unfortunately, has become mainly a footnote in literary history, her narrative experimentation relegated to the sidelines as unreadable. James Joyce, on the contrary, who sought to render thought directly into prose, and whose works are also dismissed as unreadable by some, is today regarded as a literary giant. This may be because thoughts translate better to the page than does actual speech. In fact, the possibility that we more easily hear this form of speech than read it, may account in part for Reinshagen's success on the stage, but not as a novelist. Repetition, casual phrasing, relaxed grammar and clichés all from part of the casual conversations in which most of us engage in routinely. Thus, when this form of language is heard, it seems natural, and is easily accepted, even unquestioningly accepted, by the listener. In contrast, it may be jarring when confronted

on the printed page, as it contradicts schooling in reference to the characteristics of literary prose. Reinshagen's prose spoken from the stage may draw the spectator more deeply into the drama taking place, while similar sentence construction in a book may only distance the reader.

In contrast, Hernández's prose style is more traditionally realist. The use of slang is held to a minimum, and is generally specific to particular characters. Sayings, aphorisms and clichéd use of language are nearly absent. Where fractured speech is present, and also where it is not, her novels often feature a linking narrative voice in traditional, grammatical Spanish, that describes the setting, smooths transitions between scenes, comments on either speech or action or penetrates where the characters cannot. This narrative element is common not only to the realistic novel, but also to a variety of other historical literary styles and movements. Her prose is therefore sometimes a joining of the traditional with the modern. At other times, only the form of her novels is experimental, and narrative voice follows the first- or third-person format familiar to most readers.

It is my conviction that the novelistic works of Luisa Josefina Hernández should be numbered within the best that this century has produced, while those of Gerlind Reinshagen warrant continued attention. Therefore, the novels of these two authors should continue to be studied, both because of their treatment of themes relative to their place in time, such as consumerism and the fallout of industrialization, as well as for their presentation of eternal themes, among which are fragmentation and wholeness, the human tendency toward and capacity for violence, family relationships and death, and for their discussions of literature, the so-called meta-narrative aspect of several of their works. These novels deserve study also for their treatment of form and, especially in the case of Reinshagen's work, narrative voice. They should be translated and made available to non-

German-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking scholars of literature, that they may eventually receive the attention they merit.

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan defines the whole person as one that is “both unreduced and undivided” (320) and alternately employs the term “the unified self.”

<sup>2</sup> Confessing Church.

<sup>3</sup> Center.

<sup>4</sup> Bavarian People’s Party.

<sup>5</sup> [P]rotective custody.

<sup>6</sup> [F]inal solution to the Jewish question.

<sup>7</sup> [T]oom/space for living.

<sup>8</sup> This situation is being progressively weakened by constant immigration, motivated by genuine possibilities for improved economic status in service-sector employment in the United States, and by the lure of economic prosperity (generally ephemeral) offered by the “maquiladoras” [factories] located on the Mexican side of the border between Mexico and the United States.

<sup>9</sup> “Comadre” can variously be translated as “kinswoman,” “godmother,” “neighbor” or “friend.”

<sup>10</sup> “Godfather,” “friend,” “buddy,” “pal.”

<sup>11</sup> [U]ses normal, commonplace speech or jargon, too ... and even cliches and banalities  
....

<sup>12</sup> [I]t seems to me she’s the best we have.

<sup>13</sup> Luisa Josefina Hernández is the author who, together with Rosario Gastellanos and Elena Garro, forms the triad of the great women writers of the 1970s in Mexico.

<sup>14</sup> [T]he one not a few of us consider the major talent of our generation (and of several). We think she’s the author who’s most inventive and lucid, whose fertile/prolific volume of work enriches our language’s letters, both in drama and narrative.

<sup>15</sup> Luisa Josefina Hernández is a Mexican playwright and novelist who, right up to today, hasn’t received the attention from literary critics that she merits.

<sup>16</sup> But I have to recognize that I have also been at fault. There are people who are their own public relations office, and I don’t have time for that, I don’t try to do it. It disgusts me.

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- 17 What I've seen very clearly is that the people who sell books are their own public relations agency. They come up with propaganda, invite the people they should invite, have an active social life, make contacts. Their books begin to sell and get publicized. But I'm not one of these because I don't have time and I don't enjoy it.
- 18 [B]ecause in a woman superior intelligence, disdain for self-publicity, the intransigent violence of speaking clearly, without the support of any group or party, is less forgiven.
- 19 I'm a person who has always worked with men and I've had the same opportunities they did. I've never been degraded nor have I been treated poorly because I was a woman. I've always felt completely equal to them.
- 20 Nothing has ever happened to me because of being a woman. Nothing.
- 21 I believe that here, the most humble woman always has an opportunity and if she doesn't take advantage of it, it's because of an element of negligence, a wish not to occupy herself with these things.
- 22 Look, neither misogyny exists, nor do I believe in the story that women can't actualize themselves intellectually because of the home. That's just an excuse.
- 23 I think that we don't have the problem in Mexico. In Mexico all of us women are protected by the law. What is necessary is to educate them so that they know utilize/take advantage of their rights; the laws are there. But the men also have to be educated, because they don't know how to utilize/take advantage of their rights, either. So then, it's a general problem of ignorance, of bad education, of poor use of the law.
- 24 Now, I understand very well that in other countries there's a feminist movement because the laws aren't the same, because they have to defend their salaries, time off, maternity.
- 25 [S]upports a very bitter vision of the lack of communication and debility of the woman in the family.
- 26 As an attempt to underline the negative in the situation so her public will look for more positive alternatives.
- 27 *Heaven and Earth.*
- 28 *Sunday's Children.*
- 29 It should be understood that all references to German literature and German authors refers to those persons writing in the German language and those works produced in it.
- 30 Women's Movement.
- 31 *Prolonged Parting.*
- 32 *Serious Intention.*
- 33 *The Game of Chance.*
- 34 Please keep in mind that these comments do not apply to female German poets, as their case is somewhat different.
- 35 Literature by women about women for women.

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<sup>36</sup> *The Captain from Köpenick.*

<sup>37</sup> Filler words play a large part in our speech, one only has to pay attention to see this.

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## VITA

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- Education: Ph.D. Comparative Literature (Spanish and German),  
University of Washington, Seattle, 1999  
M.A. Comparative Literature (German and Spanish),  
University of Washington, Seattle, 1992  
B.A. *summa cum laude*, German Language & Literature/Business  
Administration (English minor),  
Hope College, Holland, 1981
- Areas of Specialization:
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  - Mexican Literature
  - Post WWII German Literature
- Dissertation: “Fragmentation and Wholeness in the Novels of Luisa Josefina  
Hernández and Gerlind Reinshagen.” The dissertation compares the  
fictional treatments of the search for wholeness within the 20th-  
century culture of fragmentation in the novelistic expression of two  
contemporary playwrights.  
Dissertation director: Professor Cynthia Steele.
- Honors: *Who’s Who in American Women*, 1991  
Phi Beta Kappa (inducted 1981)  
Delta Phi Alpha, National German Honor Society (inducted 1980)
- Teaching Experience: Spanish 101, University of Washington, 2 quarters  
Spanish 102, University of Washington, 3 quarters  
Spanish 103, University of Washington, 4 quarters  
German Ia, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 1 semester  
English IVa, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 1 semester  
English IVb, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 1 semester  
English Va, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 2 semesters  
English Vb, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 2 semesters  
English VIa, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 1 semester  
English VIb, Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 2 semester  
English III, Preparatoria José Vasconcelos, 2 semesters  
German 101, Hope College, 1 semester  
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- Colloquia: “Two Authors, Two Eras, Two Continents: Reverse Exile in the Novels of Luisa Josefina Hernández and Anna Seghers”  
Comparative Literature Invitational Colloquium,  
University of Washington, Seattle, 1994  
“Names and Naming in Don Quixote”  
Comparative Literature Invitational Colloquium,  
University of Washington, Seattle, 1991
- Translations: *Almeida: Danzón* by Luisa Josefina Hernández. Novel. In progress.  
*Triptychon* by Max Frisch. Drama. Unpublished.
- Academic Service: Please see Attachment
- Editing Experience: *Papers in Seventeenth-Century French Literature*, Tübingen, 94-95
- Study Abroad: Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, 1994-1995  
Universidad Juarez del Estado de Durango, 1991-1992  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1978-1979
- Languages: Spanish: excellent reading, writing and speaking ability  
German: excellent reading, writing and speaking ability  
Norwegian: reading knowledge  
Dutch: reading knowledge  
Czech: five quarters of course work
- Memberships: American Association of University Women  
Modern Language Association  
Phi Beta Kappa Society
- Recommendations: Mari Clack, Regent, University of Washington  
Professor C. Stephen Jaeger, Dept. of Germanics, University of Washington  
L. Lincoln Johnson, Director, Student Activities & Union Facilities, University of Washington  
Professor Marsha Landolt, Dean of the Graduate School, University of Washington  
Dr. Ernest R. Morris, Vice President for Student Affairs, University of Washington  
Professor Sven Rossel, Chair, Institut für Germanistik / Skandinavistik, Universität Wien  
Dr. George Shipley, Dept. of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Washington  
Professor Cynthia Steele, Dept. of Roman Languages & Literatures, University of Washington
- Credentials: Additional references available from The Center for Career Services  
University of Washington, Box 352190, Seattle, WA 98195  
Teaching portfolio available upon request.

## Record of Academic Service

### Administrative/Institutional

- Board of Regents (BOR), ex-officio member 1996-1997
- GPSS Presidential Proxy to BOR Committee Meetings 1995-1996, 1992-1994
- BOR Buildings & Grounds Committee, ex-officio member 1993-1994
- University Budget Committee 1996-1997
- President's Council 1996-1997
- Graduate School Council 1996-1997
- Graduate School Executive Committee 1996-1997
- Ad-Hoc Committee on Student Childcare Program Strategies 1996-1997
- President's Student Forum 1996-1997
- Academic Advisory Committee on Facilities 1996-1997
- Strategic Communications Planning Group of the U. of WA 1996-1997
- Public Exercises Committee 1996-1997
- Executive Vice Presidential Advisory Search Committee 1995-1996
- Admissions and Academic Affairs Committee 1995-1996, 1992-1994
- Interviewed:
  - 4 of 4 candidates for Provost
  - 5 of 5 candidates for Dean of the Graduate School
  - 1 of 1 candidate for Provost
  - 3 of 5 candidates for Student Services Manager

### Faculty

- Faculty Senate, ex-officio member 1996-1997
- Faculty Senate Executive Committee, ex-officio member 1996-1997
- Faculty Senate Planning and Budget Committee, ex-officio member 1996-1997
- Faculty Committee on Faculty Affairs, ex-officio member 1989-1990

### Departmental

- Departmental Senator 1995-1996, 1993-1994, 1992-1993, 1989-1990
- *Haus sprecher* (Representative) 1995
- Colloquium Committee 1994
- Student Representative to Departmental Faculty Meetings 1992-1993

### Student Government

#### Graduate and Professional Student Senate of the University of Washington

- President 1996-1997  
Responsibilities: Representing graduate and professional student interests to university administration, the press and the general public. Researching policies and documents pertinent to campus issues and student concerns.
- Public Affairs Liaison 1990-1991  
Responsibilities: Researching state, city and university policies and history in regard to graduate and professional student concerns, representing graduate student interests to the state legislature and the undergraduate student government.

**Committee Activity**

- GPSS Executive Committee 1995-1997, 1990-1991
- KCMU Radio Issues Forum, Panel Moderator 1996
- ASUW/GPSS Concerns Committee 1996-1997, 1996
- Student Activity Fee (SAF) Presentation 1997, 1996
- Graduate Day in Olympia 1996, 1994, 1993, 1991, 1990
- GPSS Elections Committee 1994, 1991
- ASUW Board of Control (GPSS delegate) 1990-1991
- Washington Student Lobby (WSL) representative 1996-1997, 1990-1991
- GPSS Presidential Proxy to Washington Student Lobby 1990
- GPSS Constitution and Bylaws Revision Committee 1996, 1990
- Vice President of Student Affairs' Student Leadership Group 1996-1997
- National Graduate & Professional Student Recognition Week Reception Committee, Chair and Moderator 1997

**Honors and Awards**

- GPSS Service Award 1994, 1993, 1992
- Steve Nord Award (for Service to the ASUW) 1991